HERMIONE:

OR, THE

ORPHAN SISTERS.

HERMIONE:

OR, THE

ORPHAN SISTERS.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY JOHN EXSHAW, No. 52,
GRAFTON-STREET.

HERMIONE:

OR, THE

ORPHAN SISTERS.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY JOHN EXSHAW, No. 98,
GRAFTON-STREET.

1791.

HERMIONE.

LETTER I.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

Auguſt ——

AFTER a dreadful interval of four weeks, I am once more enabled to reſume my pen. Your friendly letter of condolence reached me laſt night. How ſoothing, my Sophia, is the balm of ſympathy to a mind wounded by affliction. Your kind expreſſions made me diſſolve into tears; but they were tears of ſoftneſs and relief, far different from thoſe of bitterneſs and deſpair, of which lately I have ſhed ſo many.

I admit of all you ſay, my dear; but reaſoning, however ſolid and convincing, rarely makes any impreſſion in the firſt ſtages of immoderate ſorrow, and I acknowledge the juſtice without feeling the force of the conſolation you would inſpire. I know we have enjoyed our beloved parent to a more advanced period than, from his feeble conſtitution and emaciated frame, we had cauſe to hope, and that we ought not now to repine that it has pleaſed the Almighty to take him from us; ſince every year of the laſt three of his life, has appeared in the light of a leaſe from heaven hardly to be expected, and at certain ſeaſons, almoſt hardly to be

wiſhed ; but for ſome months previous to his death, he had been bleſſed with ſuch unuſual good health, that all former fears were lulled into fatal ſecurity, and I cheriſhed with delight the pleaſing idea of poſſeſſing him even in old age, and of devoting my days to render the remainder of his life comfortable and happy.

I do not however give uncontrouled ſcope to my grief, as you tell me you are convinced is the caſe : I do not complain that the ſudden ſhock of this ſad ſtroke made it perhaps overpower us with redoubled violence ; on the contrary, I bleſs heaven that the ſufferings were *ours*, not my dear father's, and that his tranſition to a better world ſeemed to all appearance unattended by thoſe painful ſtruggles and agonies which in general render the awful cloſe of life ſtill more dreadful, both to thoſe who endure and to thoſe who behold it.

Oh my beloved friend ! it is not his loſs (though God only knows how ſevere) that lies with ſuch a weight of miſery on our minds : ah no, Sophia ; to the inevitable ſtroke of death our deareſt intereſts remain every inſtant expoſed ; and dreadful as is the blow, reſignation, aſſiſted by time, eſpecially in the ſanguine ſeaſon of youth, ſeldom I believe fails in reſtoring tranquillity. Long and deeply muſt we have mourned our irreparable misfortune : yet I know I am not formed different from the reſt of mankind, and what millions are doomed to endure, I am conſcious I might have been enabled to ſupport ; but our diſtreſſes are accumulated, and beyond meaſure ſevere : not merely have we been deprived of a parent tender and revered, but to this calamity, of itſelf almoſt ſufficient to overpower human nature, is ſuperadded the agonizing

agonizing aggravation of knowing that his beſt days had been overclouded by ſecret and acute ſufferings—ſufferings which had corroded his mind, undermined his conſtitution, and to which he has at length yielded himſelf a prey; yes, my Sophia, that ever honoured parent, whom we reverenced with enthuſiaſtic affection, was a victim to remorſe, and died of that moſt painful of all diſtempers—that diſtemper which admits of no cure, and bids defiance to human ſkill—a broken heart.

His death, ever to be lamented, has brought to light a fatal, fatal ſtory; but I ſhall endeavour to enter upon it with what compoſure I can ſummon to my aid: and from the ſoothing relief of confidential communication, perhaps my ſorrows may derive ſome alleviation.

After being ſeized with the fit which proved, in its conſequences, ſo dreadful, a ſhort interval of eaſe ſucceeded, which my ſiſter and I, unuſed to ſcenes of this alarming nature, vainly regarded as the certain ſymptoms of recovery; but my father, who felt himſelf inwardly gone, perceived with pain our deluſive error. My dear girls, ſaid he, in a voice, ah! how exhauſted! you muſt endeavour to reconcile yourſelves to the ſhock which awaits you: the will of heaven muſt not only be obeyed, in that we have neither choice nor merit, but it muſt be obeyed with ſubmiſſion and without a murmur. The Almighty is about to deprive you, as you muſt at preſent imagine, of your only ſurviving parent; but know, another yet remains, who, I truſt, will be prevailed with, after I am gone, to ſupply the place and fulfil the duties of a father.

To this ſolemn addreſs, which ſeemed to annihilate my ſenſes, I was unable to reply; but Fanny's feelings found vent in tears. She burſt into an agony of grief—oh deareſt papa, cried ſhe, who upon earth can to us ſupply your place? when you leave us, we ſhall be alone in the world; no one cares for us, no one loves us, we have no friend but you.

For the ſake of heaven compoſe yourſelves, my deareſt children, replied my father. I leave you neither unprotected nor unfriended; and ſevere as is the firſt early ſtroke to youthful and ſuſceptible hearts, a little time I hope will abate the poignancy of your regret; but the preſent moments, added he, after a ſhort pauſe, are unſpeakably precious. Let Howard be ſent for in all haſte: tell him to make all the expedition in his power, and inform him that I expect, from his faithful attachment, the moſt painful, though moſt neceſſary offices of friendſhip—that he will cloſe my eyes and receive my laſt injunctions. A meſſenger was inſtantly diſpatched. Mr. Howard was at Clarance, whither he had gone but the evening before, having left my father in perfect health. He travelled with the utmoſt haſte; yet the few hours that elapſed before he appeared, to us ſeemed an age. My father, though the dreadful ſymptoms of approaching diſſolution rapidly encreaſed, ſtill retained his ſenſes unimpaired; and on being informed that his friend was in the houſe, he expreſſed his gratitude to heaven that he had not breathed his laſt ſigh without ſeeing him, and deſired that he might be inſtantly introduced into his bed chamber.

On his entrance, Mr. Howard found my ſiſter, whom no entreaties could perſuade to

leave the room, vainly ſtriving to ſuppreſs ſobs, which the apprehenſion of too violently affecting our dying parent obliged her to endeavour, though ineffectually, to reſtrain. My feelings were ſuch as admitted not of the relief of tears; the ſtupor of deſpair had benumbed every faculty. I was alive only to the ſenſations of miſery; and concealed by the curtains, I kneeled at the ſide of the bed, offering up ſilent petitions for that recovery, of which I had now loſt the moſt diſtant hope. My father, after expreſſing his ſatisfaction on ſeeing Mr. Howard, deſired the phyſician, and all, excepting that worthy friend, my ſiſter and myſelf, ſhould leave the room. This requeſt being inſtantly complied with, he beſought Mr. Howard to open a bureau which ſtood in the chamber: you will there find a manuſcript, ſaid he, dated ſome years ago, and written by my own hand: this manuſcript, my dear girls, addreſſing himſelf to us) contains a horrid tale, which I could wiſh were for ever buried with me in the grave; but as it is eſſentially neceſſary that your real ſituation in life ſhould be made known to you at my death, when, expoſed to the dangers and difficulties of a world with which you are totally unacquainted, the protection of your relations muſt be peculiarly important, I have conſidered it as a duty incumbent on me, to leave behind an impartial relation of that ſeries of misfortunes, that checquered train of evils, which have rendered me an alien from my family, an exile from my country, and have long baniſhed comfort and tranquillity from my boſom. So oppreſſed was his articulation, and ſo feeble his voice, that our dear father did not finiſh the ſpeech without many

many interruptions from weakneſs and fatigue, and the laſt words half died upon his lips; but having a little recovered himſelf—you, my dear friend, ſaid he to Mrs. Howard, will I hope afford my girls conſolation and ſupport under the pain of this ſevere and unexpected communication. To your care I bequeath them. See them ſafe under the protection of Benſley or my father; repreſent to them, when they are able to liſten to comfort, that my penitence has been almoſt proportioned to my crimes; and ah, my dear Howard! if poſſible deteſt not the miſerable author of calamities, the guilt of which, fifteen long years of remorſe have, I truſt, obliterated from the records of heaven.

Sophia, what were at that moment my ſenſations? Is it in language to expreſs them? Ah no! they were inconceivable and unutterable! I felt there was yet an agony ſuperior to that of loſing all that is deareſt to us on earth; and while diſtraction drew an exclamation of deſpair from my ſiſter, horror benumbed my ſenſes; and I ſunk lifeleſs on the floor.

When my recollection was reſtored, I found myſelf in bed in my own apartment. The tranſports of Fanny's grief, and the gloomy ſilence of Thérêſe, and the phyſician who attended me, too evidently told that all was over with my dear father. Exhauſted with the exertion of ſpeaking, he had breathed his laſt ſigh almoſt in the inſtant that I was carried out of his chamber.

You, my Sophia, who are happily bleſſed with beloved and indulgent parents, may be perhaps enabled to form ſome idea adequate to the diſtraction a loſs like ours muſt have occaſioned: yet, yet, my dear, this was not all; an awful

awful obſcurity ſeemed to envelope ſome hidden ſource of unknown and additional miſery. We were filled with horror inconceivable. To part with our deareſt father at that inſtant, ſeemed an evil inferior to knowing he had lived with a load of anguiſh on his conſcience; and anxiouſly as we wiſhed, we yet dreaded ten thouſand times more to have the fearful myſtery explained.

After a night of acute diſtreſs, ſleep kindly came to our relief, and buried us for about an hour in a bleſſed ſtate of forgetfulneſs; yet even in ſlumber, a melancholy gloom pervaded our repoſe, and we awoke only ſufficiently recruited to be able to weep.

We were then viſited by Mr. Howard, who ſympathized in our ſufferings with a degree of feeling that muſt for ever endear him to our hearts. Ah, Mr. Howard! cried I, the moment I could articulate for my tears—where, where are thoſe fatal papers of my dear, dear father's which have been intruſted to your care? Have you yourſelf peruſed them? Tell me, for heaven's ſake! are the contents too horrible—are they ſuch as we ſhall be able to read and not expoſe?

I will not attempt to conceal from you, ſaid he, with the tendereſt paſſion, though not without heſitation, that they are of ſuch a nature as muſt both hurt and affect you; yet there are mingled in this diſtreſſing narrative, ſo many alleviating circumſtances to ſoften cenſure and ſilence condemnation, that I hope the communication will ſhock neither of you too ſeverely, when you are in a ſituation to receive the information with more compoſure than it can be ſuppoſed you at preſent poſſeſs.

Oh!

Oh! cried Fanny, can any thing augment our preſent miſery? or if that were indeed poſſible, muſt not ſuſpence more effectually add to it than any intelligence we can now receive? I was in hopes of having time granted me, ſaid he, to ſoften the communication by degrees; but ſince you are ſo violently alarmed, I believe any certainty is almoſt preferable to your preſent ſtate of ſuſpence. I ſhall therefore bring you the packet; I only entreat that you will allow me, before you open it, the favour of one half hour's converſation, that I may be ſatisfied I do not commit too great an imprudence in venturing to intruſt you with it.

This worthy man then began to hint at its contents; but in ſpite of all his endeavours to palliate and ſoften the ſad recital, the ſhock entirely overpowered us; yet I inſiſted on knowing all; and breathleſs with terror, received the dreadful manuſcript from his hands.

Let me make but one obſervation, cried he, on delivering it: the years of ſelf reproach and anguiſh, which ſucceeded to your father's errors, ſo pathetically deſcribed by himſelf, more than atone for his faults. This penitence, his deep felt ſenſe of every breach of duty, and the unerring rectitude of his mind and conduct the inſtant he was awakened from the delirium of paſſion, even convince me there was inherent in his boſom, a ſecret ſentiment of ſuperior virtue, which, however obſcured and ſuppreſſed by the force of miſguided feelings and the violence of temptation, required but the moment of remorſe to expand and once more fully regain its influence over his actions.

What miſery my ſiſter and I endured from the melancholy narration, and the tears we ſhed over

over it, you, my Sophia, when you have perused the packet transcribed by Mr. Howard, which accompanies this, may be almost enabled to conceive: a tedious and severe illness, from which I am still but feebly recovered, was the natural and inevitable consequence of such a conflict of emotions.

It is not, I own, without a sensation of repugnance, that I prevail with myself to send you this dismal tale; but alas! so public has been every circumstance of my father's misfortunes (those which greatly extenuate his errors excepted) that I have reason to believe even you, my dear, have often heard of the miserable fate of Lord Linrose, as a remarkable event that took place in a family of distinction, and made much noise in the world some time previous to your birth; but that my father was the unhappy source of such a train of calamities, oh! who could have conceived possible!—that astonishing fact never, never could you have divined.

I consider this confidence, therefore, as a justification of his memory; and though the sad relation itself is a sacred trust to be reposed only in the faithful bosom of friendship, would to heaven all the world were as well acquainted with his remorse as with his faults; and that the knowledge of his sufferings could wholly obliterate the recollection of his errors. Adieu, my dearest friend.

Yours affectionately,

H. SEYMOUR.

TO MY DAUGHTERS.

WHEN this packet is delivered to my dear girls, I ſhall not have to bluſh for its contents: I ſhall be then no more: and as it is eſſentially requiſite that they ſhould one day be made acquainted with their real ſituation in life, I have for two reaſons preferred that awful period for this painful communication: in the firſt place, the information I am about to diſcloſe, is attended with circumſtances of a nature ſo mortifying, humiliating, and ſevere, that at that ſolemn period only can I ſupport the idea of preſenting myſelf to the aſtoniſhed view of my children, in a light ſo different from that in which they have ever been accuſtomed to regard me; and ſecondly, when their ſoft and affectionate hearts are ſubdued by affliction at their recent loſs, only can I flatter myſelf they will look with candour and indulgence on errors—nay crimes—of which, till that inſtant, they had believed me incapable.

Be not overwhelmed with horror, my beloved children, on peruſing theſe words:—words of an import ſo dreadful, and which you never could have conceived connected with your father's name. Heaven has, I truſt, accepted the tribute of ſufferings, which heaven alone could have enabled me to endure; and ere theſe lines are ſubmitted to your knowledge, as all my ſorrows will be laid at reſt, let the conſideration of that felicity which I humbly hope will be then my portion, conſole and ſuſtain you under the ſhock your ſenſibility muſt receive from the tale of woe I am about to unfold. You muſt often have regretted, I am convinced,

convinced, the ſolitude in which I have obliged you to live; and I make no doubt, in ſecret condemned that averſeneſs to all ſocial intercourſe, which I have uniformly teſtified as long as your remembrance can trace back. This, and many other particulars, which perhaps may have at times proved matter both of ſurprize and concern, I mean here fully to explain; and in particular that queſtion will at length receive a ſatisfactory reply, which has been hitherto productive only of vague, evaſive, and embarraſſed anſwers, viz.—how I, an Engliſhman, apparently attached to my own nation, and partial to its cuſtoms, ſhould have voluntarily exiled myſelf from my country, and ſecluding myſelf from my family, my friends, and the world, formed the ſingular reſolution of terminating my days in a retired ſpot in the South of France.

I haſten therefore to inform you, that even your name has hitherto been a ſecret to you.

My father, though my miſconduct has caſt a cloud over his days, I hope, and believe, is ſtill alive;—at leaſt, I had intelligence of his being in good health, within a few days from this date. He is Earl of Belmont, a nobleman of extenſive intereſt in his own country; and I am the eldeſt of two ſons, which, with one daughter, whoſe birth occaſioned the death of her mother, is all the family he ever poſſeſſed.

I paſs over the early part of my life, which I ſpent at home, and generally in the country under the direction of a very worthy man, who preſided as tutor over my brother and myſelf. My father, who was violent in prejudice and rigid in principle, allowed us few indulgencies; and had made choice of our preceptor rather for the integrity of his heart, than on account of the

the ſuperior abilities of his mind, which had been narrowed by the retirement of life, and total ignorance of the world: but my Lord, whoſe knowledge of men and manners had not rendered *his* notions leſs contracted, imagined we could no where ſo effectually imbibe the firſt ſentiments of virtue, as under the tuition of a man whoſe purity was ſuch, that he ſeemed to know little difference between an error and a crime. The ſyſtem by which we were educated, was of courſe ſtrict in the extreme; but the auſtere principles that had been early implanted in our minds, our companions at College found it no difficult matter to extirpate; and a ſlight acquaintance with ſociety, ſoon convinced us, that we were incapable of adhering to habits, abſurd in themſelves, and of no aſſiſtance either to religion or morality. Having once deviated from prejudices, however weak, which the mind has been accuſtomed to regard as ſacred, to ſtop exactly at the proper limits of rectitude requires a portion of ſteady fortitude even ſuperior to that which preſerves us firm in our firſt impreſſions; the reformation is indeed but too often followed by a total revolution of principle, and even virtue herſelf is not unfrequently overturned under the appellation of *confined ideas*.—Such, at leaſt, was in part the change my mind underwent after having reſided ſome time at the univerſity.

When the part of my education to be there attained was completed, I ſet out on my travels; and immediately after my return from the Continent, that buſy period of my life commenced, the bitter recollection of which almoſt incapacitates me from relating the many painful occurrences it produced.

My

My brother had choſen a military life, and we had not met during three years which I ſpent abroad. We kept up a conſtant correſpondence however; and he was with his regiment in Ireland at the time of my arrival in England. I received a letter from him ſoon after, intimating his having lately married a young lady, of whom he ſeemed paſſionately enamoured, but who did not poſſeſs any of thoſe advantages, either of family or fortune, likely to reconcile my father to a ſtep in which he had not been conſulted. Conſcious how tenacious my Lord ever had been of his authority, added to an invincible prepoſſeſſion, which he had long entertained againſt the Iriſh nation, my brother, in the height of his nuptial felicity, could not avoid ſuffering the ſevereſt apprehenſions for the conſequences of his imprudence; and beſought me to exert all my influence with my father, to ſoften his wrath at this unexpected intelligence.

My endeavours, however, were on this head ineffectual; my Lord was overwhelmed with a rage that did not evaporate with its violence, but ſubſided into a determined, inflexible reſentment; by which he allowed himſelf to be ſo completely governed, that he reſolved never more to behold his diſobedient ſon; who muſt have found himſelf extremely embarraſſed in his finances, had not my purſe ſupplied his neceſſities to the utmoſt extent of my ability. In vain I repreſented to my father that the alliance, though neither ſplendid nor deſirable, was equally removed from what could be deemed diſgraceful: he ſilenced me with vehemence; and ſolemnly declared, that never more ſhould my brother receive the ſhadow of his countenance.

A reſo-

A reſolution, alas! which my ſuperior miſconduct alone, perſuaded him to relinquiſh.

I paſſed the ſummer after my return at my father's country ſeat; and ſpent great part of my time in hunting—my favourite amuſement. Returning one day from the chaſe, the weather being extremly ſultry, my fatigue occaſioned an extreme thirſt, which induced me to diſmount at the door of a farm-houſe poſſeſſed by one of my father's tenants, not many miles from the caſtle.

As I knocked, the farmer himſelf appeared; and upon mentioning my name, and requeſting a draught of ſomething to refreſh me, he conducted me with the utmoſt hurry of civility into a ſmall ruſtic parlour, where were ſitting his wife and daughter. The latter aſtoniſhed me with her uncommon beauty; which was rendered ſtill more intereſting from having ſurprized her in tears: ſhe allowed me no time however to contemplate her charms, for aſhamed of being caught by a ſtranger in that ſituation, ſhe made no return to my ſalutation, but ran haſtily out of the room.

I made a thouſand apologies to the farmer's wife for my intruſion; and ſo greatly was I ſtruck with the daughter's appearance, that I could not help expreſſing my regret at beholding her in ſuch affliction; which I intended as the leaſt inquiſitive method I could deviſe of enquiring the cauſe.

Oh, nothing in the world, my Lord, ſaid the farmer, your Lordſhip does her too much honour in obſerving her. It would be very far either from her mother's wiſh or mine to vex her, if ſhe would be perſuaded to liſten to her own intereſt; but girls are ſo wilful——

From

From this I conjectured what I afterwards learnt was the caſe—that the old people were teazing their daughter to diſpoſe of her hand contrary to her inclination. But though I felt myſelf unaccountably intereſted in what I had ſeen, it was neceſſary that my enquiries ſhould immediately end, as the good woman came at that inſtant to ſupply me with what I had aſked for, and I was conſtrained unwillingly to depart.

This beautiful girl ran in my head the whole day: though I make no doubt but I ſhould have forgotten that ſhe exiſted in a week, had not my infant paſſion been nouriſhed by ſeveral circumſtances which afterwards occurred.

When I returned to dinner, I found a large party of neighbours who were paying viſits of congratulation at the Caſtle on account of my ſiſter Lady Ann's marriage with Mr. Vere, an event that had taken place a few weeks before. In the courſe of converſation at table, I mentioned my little adventure, particularly dwelling on the extreme beauty and diſtreſs of the tenant's daughter.—Yes, cried the curate, who happened to be preſent, Fanny is the prettieſt girl in the pariſh, and one of the beſt; but her parents have carried matters much too far, and have rendered her quite miſerable, by inſiſting on the poor young woman's diſpoſing of herſelf to fat Robin, your Lordſhip's gamekeeper. They have teazed and tormented her till they had almoſt driven her to venture on a very alarming ſtep, to get rid of their importunities; ſhe had privately determined to leave home, and take her chance of finding a ſervice in town; but my wife ſuſpecting her intention, deterred her from a ſcheme ſo fraught with danger,

ger, by repreſenting the hazards attending ſuch an exploit.

The converſation ſhifted to other topicks; but Fanny and her diſtreſs frequently occurred to my mind. I wiſhed much to deliver her from it; but I diſtruſted myſelf ſo little, as never once to ſuſpect I was actuated in my wiſhes to relieve her by any other motive than that intereſt which youth and beauty, even without having produced any particular predilection, ſeldom fail to excite in hearts of common ſenſibility. She appeared ſo amiable and ſo innocent that, free as were my notions on certain ſubjects, the idea of deriving any ſiniſter advantage to myſelf by releaſing her from her preſent perſecutions, never entered my imagination.

I contrived, as the beſt method of ſucceeding I could deviſe, to intereſt Lady Ann in the affair: who during her walks called at the farmer's, and repreſented ſo ſtrongly to his wife, who had been an old ſervant in the family, the cruelty and injuſtice of forcing her daughter into the arms of a man ſhe deteſted, that the old woman was prevailed on to give up the point herſelf, and faithfully promiſed to uſe all her influence with her huſband to perſuade him to relinquiſh the plan likewiſe. In this viſit my ſiſter was ſo much pleaſed with the bewitching ſimplicity of Fanny's manners and appearance, and the unbounded gratitude ſhe expreſſed for this obligation, that ſhe made her an offer of ſupplying the place of her maid, who was juſt leaving her. Fanny thankfully accepted the propoſal; and the old people, happy in thinking their daughter ſettled under the protection of Lady Ann, conſented with eagerneſs to the meaſure;

meaſure; ſo that on my return from a ſhort excurſion I had made about that time, I found Fanny actually reſiding in the caſtle.

The frequent opportunities I now enjoyed of ſeeing her, in a ſhort time convinced me I was not proof againſt her charms. Far, however, from ſtifling this flame in its progreſs, I allowed it every encouragement and indulgence. Some ſimilar amours abroad, into which bad company and ungoverned paſſions led me, had already blunted, though not eradicated, my firſt feelings of repugnance at the idea of ſeduction; and I retained merely virtue ſufficient to undergo that penance, which conſcience, except where the heart is hardened in iniquity, never fails to exact from vice upon every new violation of her laws. But theſe tranſient ſcruples were not ſufficiently powerful to enable me to liſten to dictates ſo auſtere; I had little fear of being unſucceſsful with a young country girl who had not as yet, I imagined, formed any attachment, and whoſe heart, I concluded, would eaſily yield to the vanity of having engaged mine. I therefore aſſailed this amiable and unfortunate girl, with all the warmth and force of the moſt perſuaſive paſſion; but I ſoon found that an innate love of virtue, and ſentiments of pride ſuperior to her condition, induced her to reject my offers and advances with horror and diſdain. I was not, however, repulſed: the ſucceſs attending former purſuits made me ſtill confident of prevailing in the end; but the reſiſtance I met with ſo inflamed and augmented my affection, that from an inſinuating inclination, which might have been in its infancy eaſily ſubdued, I found this attachment was become a violent and unmanageable paſſion,

paſſion, that, in its conſequences, involved both its innocent object and myſelf in miſery and ruin.

I became at laſt alarmed on perceiving how eſſential this affair was grown to my repoſe; that Fanny was every hour gaining ground in my heart and riſing in my eſtimation, while I ſeemed as far as ever from making any progreſs in hers; and I began to think her worthy of a more honourable flame, and to compaſſionate the uneaſineſs into which my ſolicitations had thrown her.

I ſoon perceived that for my own happineſs as well as hers, my importunities had been carried greatly too far, and I determined to make one great effort to reſtore my own tranquillity and her peace; but I did not conſider how difficult the taſk would prove; unuſed to conſtraint, accuſtomed to give inclination full ſwing, to conquer at once a predilection ſo formidable, was an undertaking much too violent with which to begin my firſt eſſay of ſelf-denial. I reſolved, however, to try the effects of abſence, a medicine of wonderful efficacy in diſeaſes of the heart; and accordingly propoſed to make an excurſion of a few weeks, accompanied by ſome friends who were at that time my father's gueſts.

On the evening previous to our departure, fatigued with the exertions which the attentions due to a large company of ladies exacted, exhauſted by overacted endeavours to appear in ſpirits, and ſick of a frivolous converſation, which amuſed minds at eaſe within themſelves, and who willingly laid hold for entertainment on every little trifle that occurred, I contrived to ſlip away in the height of their mirth, intending

ing to ſtroll out towards the wood, to ſoothe my uneaſineſs by giving way to reflections which oppreſſed and overpowered me.

The night was uncommonly delightful, and the full moon ſhone with a clearneſs which reflected a pleaſing ſerenity on every object around. I gave way to a train of ideas, that filled me not only with anguiſh but alarm; I found that my paſſion for a girl ſo every way beneath me, poſſeſſed not only the power of deſtroying my peace, but even in ſome meaſure had weakened my reaſon: for ſo entirely had my heart ſurrendered to its influence, that the thoughts of relinquiſhing every proſpect of preferment and dignity in my future eſtabliſhment, and the certainty of ruining myſelf with my father, were leſs dreadful to my apprehenſion than the reſolution of thwarting an attachment, to which ſeemed annexed every hope of happineſs and enjoyment: in a word—that the poſſeſſion of Fanny in a legal manner was more than a recompence for the many evils which I knew muſt follow ſuch a ſtep.

I ſtarted from my reverie, when I found how unjuſtifiably far my imagination had carried me; and endeavoured to repreſent to myſelf the weakneſs and folly, as well as the danger, attending the indulgence of ſuch reflections. Perceiving how fatally ſolitude and muſing enfeeble fortitude and nouriſh the foibles of the heart, I was about to return back to the houſe, when a voice which I heard at ſome diſtance, induced me to ſtop for a moment: and inſtantly recollecting it to be my dear Fanny's, my intention of returning was immediately converted into a reſolution of approaching as ſoftly as poſſible to the place where ſhe ſat, in order

to

to overhear her converſation. This I effected with great caution; and found ſhe was enjoying the cool of the evening in company with one of her companions, and that not fearing interruption from any of the family at that hour, they had ventured to ſeat themſelves on the ſide of ſome bulhes in the ſhrubbery.

I heard the friend, in a voice of compaſſion, endeavouring to ſoothe Fanny in conſequence of ſome complaint which I concluded ſhe had been confiding to her, and to which the moſt mournful ſighs were on her part the only replies. Her arguments of comfort were not indeed the beſt calculated for conſolation, but they were deſigned for ſympathy and expreſſed with much ſimplicity.

Indeed, my dear Fanny, ſaid ſhe, could you have been perſuaded to have accepted of my couſin, you would have eſcaped all this trouble and vexation. Time goes a great way in conquering people's diſlikes. What one likes at one time one can't abide at another; and the contrary is juſt as common. When once Mr. Robert was your huſband, you would have been obliged to have loved him; and he loves you ſo well, you know, that it muſt have come of courſe. If all this had happened now, and I'm ſure I always told you that you never would do ſo well elſewhere, there would have been no word of his young Lordſhip, and your heart would have been as light as mine is at this inſtant.

Talk not to me of your couſin, cried Fanny in a tone of impatience mixed with deſpondency —I hate and deteſt him. What have I not ſuffered, added ſhe, melting into tears after a ſhort pauſe, within theſe laſt ſix ſad months: tormented

mented by that hateful man, teized by my mother, terrified by my father; no ſooner had I got rid of that perſecution, than I came hither to endure another a thouſand times more inſupportable; and what courſe can I poſſibly now purſue, which is not loaded with difficulties and attended on all ſides with danger? If I return home, I dread reviving the old ſtory; if I remain here, then certain miſery awaits me; and oh! at times, my dear Jenny, at times I am almoſt terrified for myſelf; for though from my heart I abhor my Lord's inſulting offers and propoſals, yet alas! my heart is weak, and I find it is impoſſible to abhor *him*.

I often wiſh, continued ſhe, in the ſame mournful accents, that I had either died laſt year, when I was ſo ill and all my friends were weeping round me—ah! what anguiſh had I been ſpared!—or that it had pleaſed God to have placed me in a ſituation leſs beneath the only man who ever made the ſlighteſt impreſſion on my heart. But this is a wiſh which carries me ſo far, and ſoftens me ſo ſadly, that I dare not allow myſelf to dwell upon it. Yet, Jenny, I cannot reſiſt ſometimes indulging the idea of what unſpeakable happineſs muſt have been my lot, had the Almighty leſſened the immenſe diſtance between us, and I had ſtill poſſeſſed the bleſſing of being agreeable to him. Had it ſo happened; had I been placed in his ſtation, and he been in mine, I'm certain I ſhould have joyfully overlooked every objection to have made *him* happy: and I often think, if his Lordſhip profeſſes to love me ſo well now, when I uſe my utmoſt endeavours to conceal my fatal partiality, ſurely he would not have loved me leſs, when all my happineſs centered in the wiſh

of

of being agreeable in his eyes: yet as matters go with great people, *he* will probably marry ſome rich lady, continued ſhe, her tears flowing abundantly, who may regard nothing but his fine eſtate and ſplendid titles, and one beſides whom he may not even himſelf love; for great people do not marry as we do.

What a ſad thing it is, that all great gentlemen are ſuch rakes, cried the friend. But could you not contrive to give your lady warning? I'll warrant a few weeks abſence will put all to rights.

That is what I have often thought of, cried the other, and what I am afraid I ſhall be conſtrained to do at laſt: but oh! my dear Jenny! what will not ſuch a ſtep coſt me? ſhall I be able to live, after I quit the caſtle? But to be ſure quit it I muſt, and the ſooner I die the better.

Nay, for my part, I know nothing half ſo frightful as dying, I promiſe, you, cried the friend. How can you talk ſo wildly? But you'll think better of that, I truſt, before long: you are not the firſt, God knows, that has been croſſed in love, and people don't always die for all that.

Melted beyond expreſſion by what I overheard, I ſcarce breathed, from the fear of loſing one word of this artleſs, intereſting converſation. When the friend aroſe, and propoſed returning home, I heard Fanny offer to accompany her part of the way to the village, ſaying ſhe was not afraid, though alone and ſo late, as the moon ſhone bright, and ſhe would return by a private gate which led from the park into the fields, and was a near cut. They immediately walked away, and I remained in a ſtate of

of mind not to be conceived but in ſimilar circumſtances.

The diſcovery I had made of my gentle Fanny's amiable partiality, in the very moment that I was exhauſting every ſource of fortitude to enable me to renounce her, threw me into a ſtate little ſhort of diſtraction; and determined me at once to overleap all the bars that lay in the way, and to offer her my hand and heart in a legal manner. This reſolution, the offspring of an overheated imagination, and of that impetuoſity of temper which in a thouſand inſtances I have had ſuch cauſe to deplore, I reſolved inſtantly to make known to her, and to wait her return at the little gate, in order to communicate it. During this interval, inſtead of recalling my reaſon to my aid, and maturely weighing the conſequences of ſo imprudent a determination, I gave way to the delirium, and indulged in a train of the moſt pleaſing and flattering illuſions: I imagined I was beginning to enjoy a foretaſte of that happineſs from which an abſurd prejudice had too long precluded me; and I carefully checked every riſing objection to a meaſure which already diffuſed ſuch infinite ſatisfaction over my mind.

I walked backwards and forwards, anticipating that delight in the poſſeſſion of the dear object of my affections, which with ſuch amiable ſimplicity ſhe herſelf had deſcribed but the moment before, and dwelt with particular pleaſure on the ſoothing idea of the height to which gratitude muſt raiſe her attachment when ſhe came to know what proofs I meant to give her of mine.

At laſt Fanny appeared in ſight, and I flew towards her. I acknowledged the enchanting

diſcovery

diſcovery I had made, and the effect *that* diſcovery had produced upon my heart, till wholly overpowered with my vows and proteſtations, ſhe wept in my arms, and confeſſed that ſhe loved me above all men. We were in this ſituation, when the ſupper bell obliged us to ſeparate. Fanny, agitated and bewildered by this unexpected event, and apprehenſive of detection, at length prevailed with me, though not without difficulty, to leave her, having promiſed to meet me in the wood early next morning.

On my return to the company, I found my brother in law had received letters from town which required his immediate attendance there. As my ſiſter of courſe accompanied him, I knew Fanny muſt be of the party; and to leave her now, was as far diſtant from my thoughts as it had been fixed in my determination three hours before. I therefore pretended to have had diſpatches by the ſame poſt, which obliged me to viſit London likewiſe; and without much difficulty got myſelf excuſed from the excurſion which had originally been planned by myſelf.

When I retired to reſt, I had leiſure to reflect on the events of the day. My mind having time to cool, I began clearly to ſee that I was ſtanding on the threſhold of danger. Fanny's image however, which perpetually preſented itſelf to my view, and the recollection of the ſcene which ſo lately had paſſed between us, the vows that had proceeded from my lips, warm from my heart, and the ſoft gratitude ſhe had expreſſed in terms ſo endearing, all fixed me immoveably in my determination; though I perceived through the cloud which paſſion threw over my reaſon, a ſource of innumerable troubles and objections; but

but theſe gloomy ſuggeſtions a lively imagination and ſanguine hopes, enabled me quickly to chaſe from my thoughts.

I began at laſt to form a ſcheme to which I hoped my dear Fanny would eaſily be induced to conſent: this was, to be united to her privately, and carefully to conceal the connection till my father's death ſhould leave me at liberty to avow my choice; and this, with extreme caution, I concluded might be effected.

On meeting next morning, I communicated my plan, which met with my dear girl's approbation: one circumſtance alone gave her uneaſineſs and held her determination for ſome time ſuſpended; this was, how ſhe ſhould conduct herſelf with regard to her parents, to whom ſhe was tenderly attached, and who, ſhe ſaid, ſhe well knew muſt receive a mortal wound were they to imagine her capable of conſenting to any ſtep prejudicial to her reputation. It was impoſſible for me to agree to their being informed of our private marriage, as ſo many reaſons required it to be kept an inviolable ſecret; and there was ſo little probability that two old people of their condition would preſerve concealed, what a due regard to the honour of their only child muſt prompt them to divulge, when her elopement and concealment ſhould call her fame in queſtion. This was ſo apparent, that Fanny was eaſily convinced of the neceſſity, however diſagreeable, of leaving them in ignorance. The idea however of embittering their days with the belief of her ſeduction drove her almoſt to deſpair: yet it is not ſurprizing that my arguments and endearments, my promiſes and profeſſions, ſhould have gradually reconciled her to inflicting this blow; as

I did not fail to ſuggeſt the triumph they would one day experience in the diſcovery of her exaltation and innocence; beſides that I propoſed to ſoften their anxiety by dictating a letter, which Fanny actually wrote to her mother, acquainting her that for reaſons ſhe was not at liberty to reveal, ſhe was forced to conceal herſelf for a ſeaſon from them and the world, but that period would certainly arrive when ſhe ſhould again embrace them; adding many aſſurances that when ſhe ſhould have that happineſs, it would be without a bluſh for her paſt conduct, which ever had been, and ever ſhould continue to be, conformable to the principles and inſtructions ſhe had early imbibed from them. Fanny likewiſe promiſed to give them intelligence of her welfare from time to time, if they would have the goodneſs ſtill to intereſt themſelves in their child's happineſs, while appearances were ſo unfavourable to her. This method, together, with an annual ſum, which I promiſed to remit to them without a poſſibility of their tracing from whence it came, made my Fanny tolerably eaſy; or rather the ſoftneſs of her nature conſpiring with her tenderneſs, overcame her ſcruples, and ſhe liſtened to a plan ſhe knew not how to improve.

Buſineſs at this time called my brother and ſiſter to viſit an eſtate lately left him in Scotland by a diſtant relation. I immediately propoſed being of the party, pretending an inclination to viſit that part of the iſland, conſcious that I could there compleat my ſcheme with the moſt ſecurity from ſuſpicion.

We accordingly ſet off; and on our arrival at Edinburgh, Fanny, who was innocence herſelf, allowed me to conduct her to a private part

of the town, where a clergyman, whom I had engaged to ſecrecy both by bribes and the moſt ſolemn oaths, performed the ceremony which united her to me by laws both human and divine.

I will confeſs to you my children, humiliating as is the avowal, that the confidence placed in me more than once tempted me to betray it; and that facility with which it was in my power to have deluded my artleſs bride with a falſe marriage, held the execution of my project for ſome time ſuſpended: but though the whole tranſaction confeſſed an unpardonable weakneſs, in this inſtance it was unſtained with guilt.

Our journey down gave me opportunities of meeting with Fanny, and converſing with her more unſuſpectedly than I could otherwiſe have hoped for; yet I could perceive that my ſiſter was not without her ſuſpicions of my partiality for her maid, and very often rallied me on it, though ſhe could not poſſibly have conceived the ſlighteſt idea of the imprudence into which my fatal weakneſs had involved me.

That my wife ſhould continue a moment in her preſent humble ſituation about my ſiſter, was what I could by no means brook. Two days therefore after our union, which had taken place on the day of our arrival, by my contrivance ſhe pretended to have received accounts of her mother's being dangerouſly ill, and requeſted leave to return home with all expedition, in order to give her the neceſſary attendance. It was not without infinite reluctance that the dear girl was prevailed on to adopt this little artifice; and the tears ſhe ſhed at parting from Lady Ann, to whom ſhe was tenderly attached, muſt inevitably have excited

ſome ſuſpicion that ſhe meant to return to her no more, had not the occaſion of her departure furniſhed an apparent excuſe for them.

As I had time to digeſt my ſcheme before it was put into execution, I had provided a ſmall houſe in a private ſtreet in London for the reſidence of my wife, under the name of Mrs. Smith. There I hoped to viſit her frequently, unſuſpected by the world, and thither I was eager to follow her. Prudence however required that I ſhould remain behind with my ſiſter and her huſband; but as they continued only a few weeks at their new eſtate, my impatience was ſoon gratified by our return to London, where I met my lovely bride with all the ardour and impatience natural to my diſpoſition.

For ſome months my paſſion, far from ſuffering any abatement, rather ſeemed to encreaſe. At this time my father came up to town; and as I lodged with him, I was conſtrained to viſit leſs often in the city, and with redoubled caution; but the difficulties which retarded our meetings, and their conſequent infrequency, gave them an unſpeakable charm—a charm, alas! the warmth of which a ſhort time diminiſhed!

The entire ſolitude in which my wife lived (for I was her only viſitor) made my ſociety and converſation her only happineſs and amuſement. Her education had totally unfitted her for mental entertainments; nor had ſhe been taught thoſe accompliſhments which fill up agreeably the leiſure hours of a woman of faſhion, and from the unavoidable retirement in which ſhe lived, little variety of converſation was poſſible: when therefore the miſt of paſſion began to diſſipate, I found her ſtill lovely, amiable, and

and innocent; but unfortunately perceived that theſe alluring qualities were not in themſelves ſufficient to retain my wandering affections. Her converſation ſoon became inſipid to me; and the deſire of embelliſhing her mind by directing her ſtudies (at firſt my moſt pleaſing amuſement) now ceaſed to intereſt me. The tenderneſs of her affection long prevented her from expreſſing even a murmur at my too apparent neglect; although I could not but perceive that her ſpirits were viſibly affected by it: and ſhe always received me, after a fortnight's ſolitary abſence, with the moſt lively expreſſions of joy.

It was not immediately however that this unhappy change took place: and your birth, my Hermione, which happened not till three years after our marriage, ſupplied your mother with a pleaſing ſource of amuſement, ſufficiently intereſting I hope to prevent her thoughts from brooding over the mortifying and painful alteration in my behaviour.

At this period I became acquainted with a ſet of companions of the moſt diſſipated character. My particular friends were two young men of agreeable and inſinuating, but of profligate manners. In their company I led the moſt irregular life: and ſoon began to conſider the hours I ſpent occaſionally with my wife as a point of duty rather than of inclination, and with regard to the diſcharge of duties which interfered with my pleaſures, I grew every day leſs ſolicitous: this therefore, among the reſt, became extremely neglected: and I heartily regretted the indiſſoluble knot which had placed your mother in a ſituation that rendered my attentions abſolutely neceſſary to her happineſs: the ſeclusion

cluſion of her life affected, but it alſo chagrined me; and her dependance, once ſo pleaſing, ſeemed now a burthen that I endeavoured to ſhake off, flattering myſelf that her child would amply compenſate for the loſs of my ſociety.

Twelve or fourteen months paſſed on in this manner; till my wife, at length wounded to the ſoul, began to adopt the worſt of all methods for recovering a loſt attachment, by complaining of my coldneſs. This ſhe did with her accuſtomed ſoftneſs, and by tears rather than reproaches; but it was a ſubject which embittered ſo extremely the ſhort intervals I ſpent with her, that they grew leſs frequent than ever, although the birth of her ſecond child (you, my dear Fanny) ought to have proved an additional tie towards cementing my affection.

My father, who regarded himſelf as exceedingly unfortunate in my brother's marriage, often propoſed to me to marry, and had at different periods pointed out ſeveral advantageous connexions, among whom he wiſhed me to chooſe; but as my heart was not intereſted, though the ſubject embarraſſed, it did not wound me, and I evaded it with little difficulty.

My ſiſter, one evening at her houſe, introduced to me a young lady with whom ſhe had been on a footing of the ſtricteſt intimacy whilſt I was on my travels, but whom, till now, I had never ſeen, owing to her having accompanied her father to the Court of Turin, where he reſided in a public character, and from which place ſhe was but juſt returned.

Miſs Marſdon was uncommonly beautiful; and her manners and addreſs, though highly cultivated,

tivated, preſerved an intereſting ſimplicity which rendered her perfectly irreſiſtible: her converſation, refined by an admirable underſtanding, embelliſhed by education, and poliſhed by an early introduction into the moſt polite company abroad, poſſeſſed an eaſe and delicacy of good breeding almoſt as ſtriking, at firſt ſight, as the charms of her figure.—I felt the full force of both, and was conquered at once. With the blind impetuoſity which marked my character, inſtead of exerting my utmoſt efforts to reſiſt and avoid a temptation I found too inſinuating, I gave way to this ſeducing paſſion, and ſhut my eyes on its unhappy conſequences, ſo fraught with miſery, remorſe, and guilt. It was then that I curſed my folly, and that infatuation which had before guided me. Ever violent and untractable, I was almoſt driven to deſpair at the recollection of the weakneſs which had placed a bar ſo inſuperable between me and my wiſhes. But there ſoon aroſe in my breaſt a ray of hope; the production of ungoverned paſſions, ſelfiſhneſs and treachery, which firſt ſuggeſted an action that has thrown the gloom of the bittereſt ſelf-reproach on all the ſucceeding years of my life.

The lovely Miſs Marſdon, an only child, and heireſs to an immenſe fortune, poſſeſſed a conſiderable eſtate which ſhe had inherited from her mother, and which lay contiguous to Belmont Caſtle. This circumſtance, though trivial in itſelf, had induced my father often to expreſs his wiſhes that a marriage between the young lady and myſelf might take place. Her abſence had hitherto entirely truſtrated this plan, and given birth to other ſchemes; but her unexpected return at this juncture made him directly

rectly renew the old topic of matrimony, to which, hitherto, I had never been prevailed on to liſten. Far from being averſe to this match, he ſaid he ſaw with pleaſure it was an union into which I would enter with avidity; and that as the young lady herſelf ſeemed, if he might judge from appearances, to receive my attentions with all the modeſt approbation I could wiſh, he thought the next ſtep was to apply to his old friend Lord Enbdon for his ſanction and conſent.

The mention of ſuch a tranſaction made my blood run cold, and I received it with an embarraſſment which not only aſtoniſhed but extremely diſpleaſed my father; though, at the very moment that I half declined what my heart panted to obtain, I was revolving in my mind the means of bringing ſuch a ſcheme to bear. The ſucceſs hitherto attending my attempt of concealment, encouraged me, and I began to flatter myſelf that my engagements with your mother might remain an eternal ſecret to the world, which would leave me at liberty to form what new ones I pleaſed with the amiable object of my preſent affections; this, I imagined, might for many years remain unknown to my real wife, who ſaw only her own ſervants, none of whom had been informed of my name, and who, being perfectly unacquainted even with the meaning of the word politics, had ever declared that newſpapers were the dulleſt of all reading; and I knew ſhe received none of the daily prints into her family. All theſe circumſtances induced me to hope that ſhe might long continue in ignorance; and that when the fatal intelligence, that I had connected myſelf with another, ſhould at length reach her ears, and

ſhe

ſhe knew my heart was totally alienated from her, I believed, or rather I forced myſelf to believe, that the gentleneſs of her nature would never allow her to plunge me at once into infamy and contempt by detection, but that ſhe might without difficulty be perſuaded, as the calamity was without remedy, to reſt ſatisfied in obſcurity, with conſcious innocence and affluence, all that had hitherto been her ſolitary portion. This certainly was a deſign which a thouſand unforeſeen accidents might diſcloſe to the world, and, at beſt, extremely improbable to effect; but I was willingly blind to the future, and ſolicitous only for the gratification of the preſent moment. I conſidered alſo, that ſhould your mother's juſt reſentment prompt her to divulge the truth, the meaſures I had taken, though not with that intention at the time, had all conſpired to prevent any credit from being given to her aſſertions: the ceremony had been performed in Scotland; the clergyman's abode ſhe knew not, nor was ſhe acquainted with his name but from the certificate of our marriage, which indeed ſtill remained in her hands, and which I regarded as the only bar. I often therefore revolved on the means of getting it into my poſſeſſion; and moſt undoubtedly ſhould one day or other have effected it, but conſcious guilt prevented me at the time from venturing on any ſteps towards this end, terrified to awaken ſuſpicion while my plot was but in agitation.

It was not without extreme anguiſh that I conſidered the felicity I was purchaſing for myſelf muſt be at the expence of an amiable young creature's happineſs, who had once been the object of my warmeſt affections, and who ſtill loved me paſſionately; who regarded me as her

guardian and protector, who lived in a manner on my ſmiles, whoſe countenance ever betrayed dejection on the ſlighteſt appearance in mine either of indifference or ill humour, and who had brought me two lovely infants, pledges of her tenderneſs and of my treachery. But I quickly chaſed away thoſe painful ſuggeſtions of conſcience; drowned them in wine, or forgot them entirely at the firſt glance of my beloved Julia.

In a word, I made my addreſſes to Miſs Marſdon, and was accepted. My Lord, overjoyed at finding me willing at laſt to cloſe with his wiſhes, haſtened the preliminaries; and Lord Embden, happy in ſettling his daughter to his ſatisfaction, (as there had ever ſubſiſted the ſtricteſt friendſhip between him and my father) inſiſted on celebrating our marriage at his country ſeat in the moſt ſumptuous manner, where a number of relations on both ſides were to be preſent.

During the preparations, my heart, though ſo near enjoying its utmoſt wiſh, was weighed down with a burthen of guilt, the ſenſation of which let none call themſelves miſerable till they have endured; for perfect miſery cannot ſubſiſt without the feelings of remorſe. As the time approached, my agitation became more violent; in the preſence of my lovely Julia they were annihilated, but alone they were inſupportable.

Miſs Marſdon and her friends had already left town, and I was to follow the next day, and the enſuing one was to determine my fate. On the evening previous to my departure, being uneaſy in my mind, I reſolved to pay your mother a viſit, while I had not as yet actually injured

jured her: you will imagine this a ſtrange ſtep in ſuch circumſtances, when on the eve of inflicting a wound which muſt for ever deſtroy her tranquillity; but in fact I was ſo oppreſſed with a load of ſecret ſufferings, that it fell to me like the diſcharge of a duty to which was attached ſome degree of merit from the pain it occaſioned me. I found her low ſpirited and indiſpoſed; ſhall I add another circumſtance calculated to have awakened every ſentiment of tenderneſs and compaſſion, had not my heart been hardened and every feeling warped in ſelfiſhneſs—ſhe was with child, and had ſuffered much from the attendant circumſtances of her ſituation: this, together with the air of *ſombre* ſecluſion which every thing wore, and which had never before ſtruck me ſo forcibly, ſoftened and affected me. Your mother was ill and alone; no parents to ſoothe, no friends to attend her; all was gloomy and dejected around her; it was I that was the occaſion of what ſhe now felt, and what ſhe had further to endure; yet—yet—I was villain enough to perſiſt in my intention to deſtroy her! not but that a violent though tranſient remorſe made me heſitate for a moment; but I preſently laboured to ſatisfy my conſcience with this ſophiſtry, that I had gone too far now to retract, and that as I had probably engaged the affections both of my wife and of my miſtreſs, and rendered their felicity dependant on mine, ſince one muſt ſuffer, it was at leaſt allowable that I ſhould ſpare regret and diſappointment from being the portion of her who had it in her power to confer unſpeakable happineſs on me.

As to your mother, the joy of ſeeing me, and the unuſual tenderneſs with which her ſituation

ation inſpired me, made her diſſolve into tears that ſilently reproached my perfidy. I pleaded an excurſion from town in excuſe for my long abſence, and informed her of an unavoidable journey I was on the eve of taking which muſt deprive me of the pleaſure of ſeeing her for a ſtill longer time. She did not utter a complaint; but drying up her tears, you have deprived yourſelf of much pleaſure, my dear Lord, ſaid ſhe; and inſtantly ordering the maid to bring the children to me, began, with all the tenderneſs of a mother, to repeat the improvements you had both made ſince my laſt viſit, which was about three months before, with many innocent expreſſions of anxiety to ſee me, and wonder at my abſence, that had fallen from the infant lips of you, my dear Hermione, then ſcarce three years old.

My children are my only conſolation in your abſence, my Lord, ſaid your mother, tenderly preſſing my hand; but I thank heaven I have *them*. To be ſure I cannot expect, in our preſent ſituation, to enjoy much of your company: but I live in the hope that the day will arrive—

The entrance of the maid, with Fanny in her arms and leading in Hermione, left the ſentence unfiniſhed which was a dagger to my heart. I think I was hardly ever more affected than when you, my Hermione, rejected my careſſes, and ſeeing your mother's eyes red with weeping, aſked me, with a reſentment which was immediately after followed by tears, why I made mama cry? This innocent reproach, under which lurked a meaning conſcious only to myſelf, made me heap expreſſions of tenderneſs on both the mother and child, while I was preparing

paring a blow for the former that laid her in the duſt.

I left the houſe in a ſtate of mind not to be expreſſed. I ſpent the firſt part of the night in miſery: but the idea of what next morning was to beſtow, removed the image of your mother in tears, and preſented to me that of a lovely and beloved bride ready to give herſelf to my wiſhes.

I accordingly ſet out next day with a large ſuite of friends, was married immediately on my arrival at the Hall, and had all my conſcientious ſcruples ſoon drowned in an intoxication of happineſs.

After ſpending ſome weeks in great gaiety, I carried my amiable bride to my father's country ſeat, to which place we were accompanied by moſt of the party; and here we continued the ſame round of amuſements for a fortnight longer. My ſoul however was ſoon to awaken from this dream of joy, and to receive the due reward of its crime in the ſhame and remorſe which ſucceeded.

The company had juſt returned one evening from an agreeable excurſion on the water, and the ladies being in high ſpirits, had inſiſted on fiddles being ſent for, ſo that a kind of ball was going forward on the lawn before the houſe, the weather being uncommonly delightful, when my ſervant, calling me aſide, delivered into my hands a letter, the ſuperſcription of which made me tremble. I haſtened inſtantly to my own apartment, where ſecuring myſelf from interruption, I found it, as I ſuſpected, from your mother, and the contents as follow:

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD LINROSE.

If your heart ever felt for one inſtant the affection you have a thouſand times ſworn to me, if during the whole courſe of your life it has been awakened by compaſſion, think what ſhe who writes to you feels at this moment: think, that to the ruin of that fame which you have clouded with ſeeming guilt, and to the total alienation of that affection which has coſt me ſo dear, is ſuperadded the inſupportable miſery of knowing you to be treacherous and inhuman. Ah! my Lord! if your boſom ſtill retains one vulnerable ſpot, where pity is not debarred an entrance, come to me inſtantly. The Almighty has lent a gracious ear to my petitions, and ſhortly ſhall you be relieved from the infamy of your preſent ſtate. My fatigues and agitations have accelerated my pangs; I am even already ill; deny me not therefore this laſt ſad dying requeſt, and deny not yourſelf the ſatisfaction of receiving my forgiveneſs; a circumſtance to which you will one day moſt aſſuredly attach ſome degree of importance. Think of me as the mother of your children: come at leaſt and contemplate your own work, and behold me, in this diſmal cottage, expire in giving birth to an infant whoſe premature exiſtence muſt throw an eternal ſtain upon its father's name.

I will not pretend to deſcribe my agonies on peruſing this pathetic letter, every word of which gave me a mortal wound. All the terrors of my perfidy (till that inſtant too fatally lulled by oppoſite paſſions) at once aſſailed me. The miſery in which my crimes had involved *her* who had once been the object of my tender-

eſt

eſt affections, the deſpair into which I was about to plunge *her* who at preſent engroſſed them with ſo much fervour, the grief and aſtoniſhment of my family, my treachery expoſed, my character blaſted for ever, altogether excited ſuch ſentiments of horror as overpowered my ſenſes, and almoſt bereaved me of reaſon.

Having fortunately ſecured myſelf from interruption, I had a little time, after the firſt ſhock was over, to conſider what ſteps I ought to purſue in a moment ſo replete with alarm. In the preſent exigency no time was to be loſt. I therefore determined to write a ſhort billet in anſwer by the return of your mother's meſſenger. It was not an eaſy taſk: to offer any thing like an apology, eſpecially on paper, was impoſſible; to work on the ſoftneſs of her nature was all my truſt, and the circumſtance on which I could build the ſlighteſt foundation for hope. I made no attempt therefore towards vindicating myſelf; but reſerving that till I ſhould ſee her, I only intimated in a few lines the anguiſh her note had given me, confeſſed appearances were againſt me, but faithfully promiſed to pay her a viſit next morning, at which time I ſhould exert my utmoſt endeavours to ſatisfy and relieve her; concluding with the moſt earneſt prayers and entreaties that ſhe would preſerve as a profound ſecret, her name, her abode, and her connexion with me, which I added would plunge us both into immediate ruin and deſtruction, were they to reach my father's knowledge.

I then enquired, though not without much perturbation, for the perſon who had brought the letter, and was told that a country girl had given it into the hands of the houſekeeper early that morning, but the party in which I had

been

been engaged had prevented my receiving it till the evening, and the girl had left no meſſage to what place an anſwer might be ſent.

I was grieved to the ſoul at this information; for as it was impoſſible for me, without exciting ſurpriſe and perhaps ſuſpicion, to quit the houſe at ſo late an hour, I was conſtrained to leave your unfortunate mother in the diſmal ſuſpence of fruitleſs expectation.

My anſwer indeed, had ſhe received it, was little calculated to have afforded her conſolation; and my viſit could only have confirmed her deſpair. I caught eagerly however at a faint ray of hope, which I cheriſhed even againſt reaſon and conviction, to prevent me from abſolute frenzy, and I could not help reſting with ſome ſlight degree of comfort on the mildneſs of this letter, though written in the heat of a reſentment ſo juſtly excited. Her gentle boſom thought not of revenge: on the contrary, her viſit to ſee me ſeemed prompted by the deſire of according me forgiveneſs.

But before I proceed in the recital of my own ſufferings, and the horrid ſcene that awaited me on the dreadful day that ſucceeded to this miſerable evening, let me previouſly inform you, with as much compoſure as I can aſſume, of the hopeleſs fate of your innocent, your injured mother, whoſe calamities I ſhall ever, with the bittereſt remorſe, to my lateſt moment deplore; and the relation of which recalls feelings ſo acute as to tear my boſom while I tranſmit them to paper.

In what manner ſhe became aequainted with the circumſtance of my marriage, I have never been able to diſcover. The perſon to whom I owe the following particulars, which, however horrible,

horrible, I was afterwards anxious to learn, and which, as a juſt and penitential humiliation, I force myſelf minutely to relate, had not informed himſelf in that point; but the fact a thouſand ways was ever liable to detection. The inſtant the report reached your mother's ears, the cold neglect of my paſt behaviour gave it an apparent credulity that diſtracted her. Determined to be at once either plunged into deſpair by the confirmation of my guilt, or relieved from the agonizing ſuſpicions of her mind, ſhe left London and ſet off for Netwall, from which place Belmont is but three miles diſtant.

Afraid to be recognized ſo near the abode of her youthful and happier days, ſhe borrowed of the woman of the inn a large cloak and hood to diſguiſe her; and terrified to intruſt a meſſenger, ordered a chaiſe to convey her within half a mile of the caſtle; where having diſcharged it, ſhe walked forward with a note in her hand, intimating that ſhe waited for me in the wood, where ſhe intreated me in the moſt earneſt manner, by all my vows of unabating tenderneſs and by every motive of humanity and compaſſion, to meet her immediately.

Theſe few lines ſhe meant herſelf to deliver to any of the ſervants ſhe might meet; but what, alas! were her emotions, when on approaching the park gate with timid and heſitating ſteps, ſhe perceived from behind ſome buſhes, where ſhe haſtily concealed herſelf, a train of carriages, among which ſhe inſtantly ſingled me out, ſeated in my phaeton with a lady whoſe appearance at the firſt glance confirmed all her apprehenſions.

Some

Some little interruption (for ſhe afterwards related every particular to her mother, who in the bitterneſs of deſpair recapitulated them minutely to my informer) obliged me to ſtop ſo near, that ſhe obſerved, or fancied ſhe obſerved me, addreſs my companion with a look of affection; I even kept her hand for an inſtant; and my voice, which reached her ears, though imperfectly, ſeemed ſoftened by tenderneſs; while that ſound, which hitherto had ever conveyed joy and exultation to your mother's boſom, produced now on her heart the effect of a ſudden ſtroke of lightning.

My countenance, however, wore a look of gaiety which accorded ſo ill with the conſciouſneſs of ſecret guilt, that the next moment ſhe condemned the injury ſhe imagined her ſuſpicions did me, and even endeavoured to accuſe her own haſty jealouſy, which had inflicted ſuch miſery without any foundation for actual deſpair. Momentary alas! was this illuſion; for as the equipages, attended by ſeveral gentlemen on horſeback, paſſed the ſpot where ſhe had concealed herſelf, ſhe plainly overheard one of them ſay to his friend, *how divinely handſome Lady Linroſe looks to-day.* Her heart died within her at theſe words, and ſhe ſunk inſenſible on the ground.

Her ſenſes were quickly reſtored: but returning recollection brought with it ſuch a weight of anguiſh and deſpair, as made her lament the tediouſneſs of death, from whence alone ſhe could now hope for relief to her wretchedneſs.

She endeavoured however to ſuggeſt a feeble hope almoſt againſt conviction, to enable her to exiſt till my return ſhould explain all: for having heard one of the footmen mention that the company

company would be home to dinner, ſhe concluded we were upon an excurſion of pleaſure.

Her health having been declining for ſome months, had much impaired her ſtrength; and it would have been impoſſible for her to have undergone the fatigues ſhe had that day endured, had not the agitations of her mind ſupplied a falſe power of exertion, not unlike the deluſive ſupport of a fever, which beſtows for a moment an additional but deſtructive vigour; for ſhe perceived not that ſhe was feeble and exhauſted while her ſpirits and her feelings were all in conflict.

At length ſhe formed a plan to wait my return on the ſpot where ſhe was, and to ſeize the opportunity of giving her note to one of my attendants after I ſhould have paſſed on, with injunctions to deliver it privately into my own hands. Finding ſhe had probably ſeveral hours to wait, ſhe endeavoured to compoſe her mind: and employed herſelf in offering up prayers to the Almighty to avert her misfortunes, or to enable her to endure them with humble and becoming ſubmiſſion; and that if it pleaſed his gracious Providence that ſhe muſt live and ſuffer, that her reaſon might not prove a ſacrifice to the agonies ſhe might be doomed to ſuſtain.

Long and tediouſly the hours rolled on: but at length the carriages came in ſight once more, and your unfortunate mother reſumed her concealed poſt. My phaeton accidentally ſtopping to allow a chariot to paſs, ſhe heard more diſtinctly than before the merriment of the whole party, and perceived the criminal author of her miſeries with a voice of pleaſure pointing

ing out to his beautiful companion the romantic charms of the ſurrounding proſpect. The inſtant we were gone, ſhe beſought one of my ſervants to take charge of her note: but this the fellow refuſed, declaring with an oath that his Lordſhip was not to be troubled with petitions at preſent.

Wound up almoſt to a pitch of diſtraction, ſhe then followed me even to the gate of the caſtle, her fears, or rather her frenzy, having ariſen to a height that gave defiance to her apprehenſion of being known, though ſuch was her diſguiſe, that it muſt have concealed her effectually. Unfortunately ſhe again encountered the ſame inhuman footman, and again entreated him to deliver her letter; but her ſolicitations only produced ſome brutal jokes; and ſhe was about to crawl from the door, when the anguiſh ſhe betrayed induced a maid ſervant, who accidentally paſſed at that moment, to enquire into the cauſe of her diſtreſs; and who, reproving the footman's indelicacy, compaſſionately undertook to take charge of it. The fellow pulling it from her hand, it was torn in pieces in the girl's ſtruggle to recover it; but delivering the fragments to your mother, ſhe faithfully engaged to preſent any other ſhe ſhould write. I ſhall give it, ſaid ſhe, to her Ladyſhip's maid, who will deliver it into my Lord's own hands.' What lady? cried the diſconſolate Fanny. Why Lady Linroſe to be ſure, ſaid the girl; my Lord's new-married lady.

Is then my Lord married? returned ſhe, in feeble accents.

Oh! ſeveral weeks ago, anſwered the other; who from her uneaſineſs, and the ſituation in which

which ſhe beheld her, began to ſuſpect that ſhe was ſome poor deluded creature;—but his Lordſhip is very generous; and if he has injured you, he will make it up beyond your expectation.

Though your mother's apprehenſions had before almoſt amounted to certainty, yet to hear the truth pronounced beyond a flattering poſſibility of doubt, made her fall ſenſeleſs into the arms of the humane girl, who inſtantly called ſome of the female ſervants to her aſſiſtance; and when your mother opened her eyes, ſhe found herſelf in the houſekeeper's parlour, whither ſhe had been conveyed. On looking round, and perceiving her ſituation in the very room where every object was as familiar to her as if it had been her own apartment when ſhe reſided in the caſtle, the recollection of what ſhe had ſuffered ſince that period wholly overpowered her; and to know herſelf ſurrounded by my domeſtics, and under the ſame roof with her huſband, yet not daring to ſolicit that ſupport and protection from his care and tenderneſs, to which, particularly in her preſent ſituation, ſhe had ſo juſt a claim, ſhe found at that inſtant that ſhame predominated in her boſom even over deſpair; and terrified every inſtant leſt accident ſhould preſent ſome of her old companions to her view, ſhe thanked her charitable aſſiſtants, and made a feeble effort to riſe as ſoon as ſhe had ſwallowed a few drops that had been given her.

The houſekeeper, however, inſiſted that ſhe ſhould remain till ſhe was ſomewhat more recovered; and a general ſympathy and curioſity having been excited, ſhe was almoſt ſtunned with interrogatories: but all that ſhe could be prevailed on to acknowledge was, that ſhe brought

brought a bill for Lord Linroſe to diſcharge; and being liable to fits, had been ſuddenly attacked with one juſt as ſhe was delivering it to the maid.

Her too apparent diſtreſs, her heſitating and embarraſſed replies to many diſtreſſing enquiries, and her tears, which now began to yield a mournful relief to agitations her utmoſt efforts could not conceal, made little credit be given to this aſſertion; and the circumſtances of her ſituation could not fail to ſuggeſt ſuſpicions of a nature the moſt injurious: yet their compaſſion left no room for contempt; and the good houſekeeper perceiving her ſcarce able to anſwer the flow of queſtions that poured in upon her from every quarter, had the humanity to ſend away all thoſe whom curioſity had drawn round her, and promiſed to deliver privately any letter ſhe ſhould confide to her care.

Your unfortunate mother then departed with fatigued ſteps from the caſtle, her mind torn by inward ſtruggles and diſtraction, and her exhauſted limbs unable to convey her farther, than to a cottage juſt without the extremity of the park, whoſe charitable owner allowed her under its roof to court that repoſe which fled equally from her eye lids and her boſom.

She inſtantly enquired of the good woman if ſhe knew farmer Williams and his wife, and how they kept on in their old days? To this ſhe was anſwered, that they were in tolerable health; but that they had received a ſhock ſome years before from the miſconduct of an only and beloved daughter, who it ſeemed too probable they never would recover.

My dear Fanny burſt into an agony of grief at theſe words, which inſtantly infuſed a ſuſpicion

cion into the country woman that her gueſt was in fact the deluded daughter of the farmer, whoſe elopement had occaſioned ſuch various reports and conjectures among her relations. The ſituation in which ſhe beheld her, on the eve of bringing an infant into the world, confirmed this idea; yet though that circumſtance was but ill calculated to invalidate the unfavourable rumours circulated at her expence, the too evident diſtreſs ſhe endured made her appear ſo juſt an object of compaſſion, that the woman proffered her every aſſiſtance in her power: your unfortunate mother however, whoſe only conſolation lay in the free indulgence of ſorrow, having aſked for pen, ink, and paper, which fortunately were to be had, requeſted to be left alone; and paſſed the night in tears, and in writing that melancholy letter, which ſo pathetically implored my pity inſtead of breathing the vengeance due to my crimes.

It was yet unfiniſhed; when finding herſelf taken violently ill, ſhe haſtened to conclude it, and enquired for a meſſenger, to whom ſhe intruſted it under cover to the houſe-keeper. Though not within ſome weeks of her expected time, fatigue and agitation ſoon brought on the pangs of child birth; and having only received what aſſiſtance the country woman could beſtow, ſhe was delivered of a boy a few hours after, without one friend to ſupport or conſole her, at a period when the agonies of her mind ſurpaſſed what nature has allotted the female frame to ſuſtain in theſe ſevere circumſtances.

No anſwer having been returned to her letter (owing to the cauſe I have already mentioned) ſhe immediately concluded herſelf totally abandoned; and began moſt fervently to hope ſhe ſhould

ſhould not long endure that accumulation of woes under which ſhe laboured: an uncommon ſenſation of weakneſs, bordering almoſt on a ſtate of infancy, convinced her of her approaching diſſolution; and ſhe regarded her releaſe not only without diſmay, but with eagerneſs and ſatisfaction.

In this ſituation her moſt earneſt wiſh was to embrace her parents before her death; to explain whatever appeared criminal and unaccountable in her conduct; and, having committed her children to their care, from whom alone ſhe now expected juſtice and protection for them, to breathe her laſt ſigh in their arms.

She therefore beſought the countrywoman to carry a meſſage to her father and mother, imploring them to deign to viſit her before ſhe expired: to this woman ſhe likewiſe confeſſed all the particulars of her unhappy ſtory, and beſought her to tell them, that could ſhe accuſe herſelf of one crime, excepting that of having deſerted them in their old age, for which ſhe hoped ſhe had been ſufficiently puniſhed, ſhe ſhould not have dared to requeſt that ſatisfaction, the only one ſhe would probably live to enjoy; and entreated them to believe, that the infant ſhe had juſt brought into the world, owed its exiſtence to an event neither criminal nor diſgraceful.

The old people, ſtunned with this unexpected intelligence, knew not what to determine. They had long concluded their daughter loſt and deluded; but their grief for her elopement was not unmixed with reſentment at her miſconduct. The circumſtances in which ſhe was reſtored to them, were far from arguing her innocence, and their firſt reſolution was to

abandon

abandon her to the fate they concluded ſhe had merited; but parental tenderneſs almoſt inſtantly converted this unnatural intention into the moſt earneſt deſire of ſeeing her once more. To her proteſtations of purity, they gave little credit. But guilty as ſhe is, ſaid the old man, ſhe is ſtill our child, and her preſent miſery obliterates her paſt crimes:—miſerable have been our days ſince her fall—the ſufferings are now become her own.

Nature, however, pleaded, ſo powerfully for their daughter in the breaſts of the good couple, that as they haſtened to the cottage, they could not help indulging ſome faint hopes, that, though appearances were ſo much againſt her, ſome alleviating circumſtances might turn out in her favour.

It may not then be difficult to imagine what muſt have been their feelings, when, on being uſhered to the ſide of the bed where ſhe lay, their beloved child, unable to ſee them after a ſeparation ſo melancholy for almoſt ſix years, gave a feeble ſhriek, and fainted away.

In this ſtate of inſenſibility ſhe continued ſo long that they gave her up for gone; but having ſent for a neighbouring ſurgeon, who adminiſtered every aſſiſtance poſſible, they had at length the ſatisfaction of ſeeing her open her eyes once more. They immediately found, however, that though life was reſtored, it was not in human power to recover her from a violent delirium with which ſhe was inſtantly ſeized. The doctor declared her in a high fever, which being attended with mortal ſymptoms, gave the moſt alarming cauſe for apprehending the worſt.

The ſituation of the unfortunate parents, who

ſaw themſelves on the point of loſing their daughter almoſt in the very inſtant that they had recovered her, cannot poſſibly be deſcribed. She was perfectly inſenſible to them and all about her, during the whole day; and raved with a frantic wildneſs which it was horrible to witneſs; often calling on my name and imploring my compaſſion in the moſt piteous manner. Her father having at one time approached her, the diſorder of her imagination made her inſtantly conceive it to be the accurſed author of all her miſeries, and throwing herſelf ſuddenly out of bed, in ſpite of every oppoſition, ſhe fell at his feet, imploring him not to murder her nor her infant: her angelic temper never once breathed an expreſſion of reſentment nor revenge, but her lips muttered unceaſing complaints, and ſhe perpetually repeated, I am juſt going to die, my Lord, won't that ſatisfy you? Ah ſpare my children!

The woman of the houſe being unable to manage her, and her weeping parents totally diſabled by grief from aſſiſting, ſhe was obliged to call in ſome of the neighbours, who could only conſtrain her by force to remain in bed.

Nature could not long ſuſtain a conflict ſo violent; nor can I, my children, force myſelf to dwell upon a ſcene, the idea of which inflicts unmitigated forture.

A few hours wore entirely out what little ſtrength remained; and after having lain ſome time quiet, her ſenſes were reſtored to her. She recollected the meſſage ſhe had diſpatched to her parents, and enquired compoſedly, though with a voice almoſt exhauſted, what anſwer had been delivered.

They, who were no farther than at the foot

of the bed, could not any longer reſtrain themſelves from ruſhing into her arms, and embracing her as ſhe lay. Their tears prevented them from articulating; but their daughter, who approached her laſt hour, was too feeble even to weep.

Oh, my beloved parents! cried ſhe, with a hollow voice, which her breathing often rendered interrupted, I ſhall now die contented, ſince I have the ſatisfaction of expiring in your arms. I hope God will forgive my undutiful conduct towards you. Alas! you ſee how I have ſuffered for it. But I hope—may I truſt you never could believe that I had thrown a ſtain on the virtuous education I received from your care. Indeed—indeed I am innocent, and really married. My aſſerting it at a moment ſo ſolemn, ought alone to convince you of the truth of this aſſurance; but, if more is neceſſary, I am in poſſeſſion of the moſt certain and convincing proofs.

She then ordered the country-woman to deliver to her parents a packet which ſhe had ſealed, and committed to her charge, on being firſt taken ill: it contained the certificate of our marriage, and ſeveral letters written and ſigned by my own hand, which plainly proved that I regarded her as my wife.

I truſted him becauſe I loved him, continued ſhe; but in ſpite of the ſtricteſt ties, you ſee he has abandoned and deſerted me, and I am going to atone with my life for the anguiſh my raſh ſtep muſt have given you in your old days. Indeed the idea of your uneaſineſs wholly embittered any ſhort gleams of comfort I might otherwiſe have enjoyed; and tranſient indeed have theſe been ſince I left you. The only

circumſtance which yielded me any conſolation in all my diſtreſſes, was the delightful hope, that the day would come when I ſhould exultingly reveal all to you, and recompenſe you and myſelf by making the old age of my beloved father and mother affluent and happy.

That day, repeated ſhe, after a pauſe, will never arrive; and perhaps it is a juſt puniſhment from Heaven for having deſerted you; in which caſe, as my repentance is moſt ſincere for that and all my tranſgreſſions, I truſt in God it will be graciouſly accepted, and that I ſhall find in the grave that peace to which my boſom has been ſo long a ſtranger. But oh, my deareſt father and mother, all my fears are for you; to me, death is a releaſe from miſery; ſince I retain no longer the affections of Lord Linroſe, I preſerve nothing that attaches me to life. I feel, indeed, for my three infants, but while my mother ſurvives, I am certain they will never know the loſs of their own; and I hope they will neither inherit my weakneſſes nor my misfortunes. Oh, may it pleaſe the Almighty to deliver them from imbibing one particle of their cruel father's hardneſs of heart.

The old people folded her alternately in their arms, and mingling tears with their bleſſings, aſſured her of their perfect forgiveneſs, and entreated her to live for their conſolation.

Oh! my deareſt parents! cried ſhe, how can you wiſh me ſo ill! diſtract me not, I beſeech you, with your deſpair! God knows if I am really ſo near my end as I imagine, but I feel myſelf inwardly gone, and ſo exhauſted, that I think the ſtruggle muſt ſoon be over. She then recapitulated the melancholy circumſtances of her misfortunes as well as weakneſs would allow her;

her; but having wholly exhauſted herſelf, ſhe mentioned being extremely drowſy, and kiſſing her infant, perhaps it may be for the laſt time, ſaid ſhe; do not quit my bedſide, my deareſt mother, while I ſleep; and ſtretching forth her hand, already bedewed with the damp of death, ſhe graſped her mother's with a feeble effort, and recommending herſelf to Heaven, in that attitude compoſed herſelf to a repoſe from which ſhe never awoke. Her ſleep, at firſt agitated and diſturbed, ſoon ſubſided into a lethargic ſtupor, and ſhe expired at midnight without a ſigh.

Think, my children, what this recital coſts me. It is worſe than death to write! To think on ſuch a ſcene—to think—God of Heaven! that I was the accurſed murderer of that ſuffering angel! that my hands dealt the fatal blow which ſtabbed her to the heart!

Oh! my daughters! be not overpowered with horror. Let not, at leaſt, a compaſſion too juſt for your hapleſs mother's fate, wholly obliterate from your boſoms that regard which your father has hitherto enjoyed. The benignant ſaint, I truſt, accepts the tribute of that bitter remorſe which has clouded the remainder of my days, and now rejoices in that bleſſed reward which her merit and her calamities ſo juſtly claim in a more glorious ſtate of exiſtence.

I now haſten to conclude the horrid tale; and return to myſelf, on that dreadful evening when your mother's letter was put into my hands.

Her ſufferings, unutterable as they proved, being unimbittered with the agonizing pangs of remorſe, could hardly ſurpaſs mine during that miſerable

miſerable night. My feelings were, if poſſible, heightened by the abſolute neceſſity of concealing what I endured, under a ſmiling countenance; this, however, I could only hope to effect by the aſſiſtance of wine, which I poured down in quantities, in hopes of drowning care and ſtifling conſcience.

To augment my diſtreſs, which intoxication, without bereaving me of my ſenſes, could but little allay, on returning to the company, I found them in all the enjoyment of mirth and innocence. The muſic had been conveyed from the lawn to the ſaloon; and the moment I appeared, I was ſolicited to join the dance. Too conſcious to refuſe, I was conſtrained to cover my anguiſh by aſſuming an air of gaiety, the moſt forced and unnatural. Happily the company were too much engroſſed with themſelves, and the amuſement in which they were engaged, to obſerve me; but the dance being ended, Lady Limroſe, my beloved Lady Limroſe approached me.

She enquired in a tender whiſper, why I had ſo long ſecluded myſelf from the company, and expreſſed her fears leſt I was ill; for which apprehenſion my pallid look, and an agitation not to be diſguiſed, gave but too much cauſe. I anſwered her, as compoſedly as I could, that I had a ſevere head-ach, which dancing had encreaſed. She then beſought me, with an anxiety that ſtabbed me to the ſoul, to fatigue myſelf no more: and careleſsly repeating that it was a complaint to which I had been liable from my infancy, I turned from her the moment I could do ſo without appearing abrupt.

Good heavens! cried I to myſelf, into what a gulph of miſery have my ungoverned paſſions plunged

plunged me! And what would your ſufferings be, moſt amiable, moſt beloved of women! did you know the injury I have done you. Were the fatal tale to reach your ears, how would your preſent tenderneſs inſtantly be converted into contempt and deteſtation.

Theſe tormenting ideas made me avoid her the whole evening: and I dreaded the hour of retirement, leſt, when we were alone, ſhe ſhould obſerve my diſtreſs, and renew her enquiries. My pretence of illneſs, however, was eaſily admitted by her unſuſpecting mind; and I pretended to ſleep; while my feelings were in a ſtate which would admit of nothing like repoſe.

Next morning a party on horſeback was proposed, and agreed to by all but myſelf. I excuſed myſelf on account of buſineſs; intending to take that opportunity to get rid of my friends, and perform my promiſed viſit to your mother, ſevere as was the taſk.

I knew not exactly the cottage in which ſhe had taken up her abode; but concluding it would not be difficult to find, I reſolved to begin the ſearch as ſoon as the company were let out.

One of the ladies, who was extremely gay, importuned me with eagerneſs during breakfaſt to poſtpone my buſineſs for at leaſt one half hour, and accompany her with one or two more of my friends in a walk to the extremity of the park, to give my opinion of a ſituation for a ruſtic temple, which ſhe adviſed my Lord to erect on a particular ſpot beyond the park gate; after which they meant to join the reſt of the party, and purſue their morning rambles together.

Conſcious guilt made me agree to the propoſal;

ſal, as I ſuppoſed I ſhould be ſoon afterwards at liberty; and I accordingly followed the young lady and my father, attended by Mr. Benſeley, who was the friend to whom I was moſt tenderly attached, and indeed the one who moſt merited my confidence and friendſhip, and accompanied by my dear Lady Linroſe, who hung on my arm as we walked along, vainly endeavouring by the ſoftneſs of her attentions to ſoothe an uneaſineſs, the cauſe of which ſhe could not penetrate.

Juſt as we got out of the park, we obſerved a good looking young woman, who ſuckled an infant, at the door of a cottage which ſtood directly on the road ſide.

That little thing appears hardly out of the egg ſhell, ſaid Lady Linroſe in paſſing. How comes it, good woman, that you expoſe it to the air ſo early?

Indeed madam, replied the woman, becauſe i breaks my heart to enter the houſe. The mother of this child expired this morning; and her old father and mother are at this moment lamenting over the body in ſo piteous a manner, that it would melt a heart of ſtone to witneſs their diſtreſs.

Theſe words made me ſhudder with the moſt dreadful apprehenſions. But I was endeavouring to perſuade the ladies, who were greatly intereſted by this mournful tale, to walk, on pretending great haſte, when a figure preſented itſelf to our view, which inſtantly arreſted their ſteps and rendered me motionleſs with horror. —It was the old man himſelf, the father of your mother; who having perceived me from the window of the cottage, in the frenzy of his deſpair, ruſhed out upon us. His aged withered face

face was pale with grief, and his whole frame ſhook with rage. Addreſſing himſelf inſtantly to me—Come in here, deteſted wretch! cried he; come in here, and contemplate your work: ſee here the fruits of your villainy in the deſtruction of my darling child, your true and lawful wife; who lies here ſacrificed by your treachery, and murdered by your own hands.

I heard no more: but uttering an exclamation of horror, fell inſenſible on the ground. Lady Linroſe, ſhrieking with terror, threw herſelf by my ſide to ſupport me, and Benſley, who was more able for the taſk, held me in his arms as I lay.

I almoſt inſtantly recovered my ſenſes; but unable to ſtand the horrid explanation which I knew muſt follow; unable at that moment, when the keeneſt remorſe began to pierce my boſom and wholly unfitted me for diſſimulation, to vindicate my innocence or even to attempt the ſlighteſt appearance of defence, while the old man's aſſertion was too ſtrongly corroborated by the effects it had produced, I kept my eyes ſtill ſhut, and pretended to remain in a ſtate of inſenſibility.

My father ſtood in mute aſtoniſhment at this ſcene, too much confounded to unravel what it meant. The farmer's frantic violence he might have conceived to be the ſudden conſequence of inſanity; but the ſituation into which his words had thrown me, gave no ſmall degree of credibility to what he had uttered, wild and extravagant as were his expreſſions.

What does all this mean? cried he to the farmer.

It means, returned the old man, that your ſon, my Lord, is a villain! yes, a perjured villain!

lain! He has married another, when my daughter has been lawfully his wife above ſix years, and ſhe this morning expired a victim to his cruelty and crimes.

Oh horrible! exclaimed Lady Linroſe; abominable wretch! how, my Lord, can you tamely ſubmit to hear that frantic old man utter falſhoods ſo infamous and impoſſible?

Infamous it is, cried the farmer; would to heaven it had alſo been impoſſible: then had I at this inſtant rejoiced over a long loſt and adored child, inſtead of mourning her miſerable end in tears and diſtraction. Oh my Lord! continued the old man, ſubdued by grief, which now ſucceeded to rage and indignation, throwing himſelf on his knees at my father's feet, from your character I dare hope for juſtice: you ſhall ſpeedily be convinced that my innocent child has been deluded in the moſt ſhameful manner; and mean as is our rank, her fame muſt and ſhall be vindicated.

He then preſented a paper to my father, which he entreated him to peruſe. It was the certificate of my marriage with your mother; and my Lord, who by this time began to be ſomewhat ſtaggered, appeared to be infinitely ſhocked on haſtily throwing his eyes over the contents.

Farmer, ſaid he, heſitating, and in much agitation, I believe my ſon may have injured your daughter; in which caſe all the reparation ſhe could have claimed, or you now can aſk, ſhall be granted you; but as to his having made her his wife, that is an aſſertion which ſhe has evidently invented to ſave her credit with you after her fall, and the falſhood of ſuch a pretence is enough to perſuade you that ſhe has not been without her ſhare of the guilt. My

ſon

ſon is, as you ſee, ſufficiently affected with the unfortunate cataſtrophe, and I am very far from vindicating his conduct; on the contrary, all that can now be done to appeaſe and conſole you is undoubtedly his duty; but in what manner this is to be effected, we muſt afterwards conſider. I ſhall take another opportunity of talking with you on this ſubject.

Come, Madam, ſaid he to Lady Linroſe, who, breathleſs with apprehenſion, had remained during this converſation in all the ſtupor of ſilent horror. Pray lean on my arm, and let us be gone from this place. Let us leave my ſon to the care of his friend. He is in no ſituation to juſtify himſelf at preſent. We ought therefore to ſuſpend our opinion of his behaviour till he can explain matters fully. *All* that he is accuſed of is utterly impoſſible.

Young men, even the very beſt of them, continued he, as he obliged her unwillingly to walk away, ſupported by his arm and accompanied by her companion, are but too prone to vices which in the more advanced periods of their lives they reflect on with regret and remorſe. As to the ridiculous ſtory of the marriage, I hope it gives you not the ſmalleſt uneaſineſs.

I cannot leave him thus, cried Lady Linroſe, whoſe voice now burſt through the ſobs and tears which had ſtopped her utterance. But my Lord urged her ſtrongly; and her friend ſo earneſtly beſought her to leave me to Benſeley's care, that ſhe at laſt unwillingly attempted to go, though ſhe often reverted her eyes, and was yet in ſight, though at ſome diſtance, when Benſeley ſaw her drop on the ground.

As ſoon as the ladies departed with my father, I opened my eyes. The farmer darted a look

look of enraged indignation at me, and walked ſorrowfully into the cottage almoſt immediately; before the door of which this dreadful ſcene had been tranſacted, and into which the woman and child had retreated at the beginning; tho' I perceived that ſhe had brought more than one face to the window to remark the conſternation into which the company had been thrown.

Only my friend Benſeley therefore remained; and even him I dreaded to look on, though he laboured to ſoothe me with words of comfort. Oh, Benſeley! cried I, as ſoon as I could find courage to ſpeak, lead me from this ſpot where every object conveys horror inexpreſſible! I will explain all to you hereafter; but at preſent my mind is incapable of talking, thinking, or acting for myſelf!

Would you return to the caſtle? cried he.

Oh! God! any where but to the caſtle. Hide me for ever from all beneath its roof, and moſt from my amiable, my injured——

I dared not add, *wife:* my lips at that moment of anguiſh refuſed to beſtow that appellation, except on the ſtill more injured deceaſed.

I ſupported myſelf on my friend's arm, and ſhame ſupplying the place of ſtrength, we were ſoon out of ſight of the cottage, and of Lady Linroſe.

Tell me, cried Benſeley, as we walked ſlowly on, tell me I entreat you, what all this means? I confound myſelf in vain to unravel the myſtery. What am I to think of the ſituation in which I ſee you? I perceive you accuſe yourſelf of the poor girl's death. But country girls don't break their hearts from having made a falſe ſtep; and it may have been with much more probability merely owing to the circumſtances of her ſituation;

tion; in which caſe, though you have certainly reaſon to reproach yourſelf, if ſhe was innocent and ſeduced, yet there may be many alleviating circumſtances to reconcile you to yourſelf, and to excuſe you even in the eyes of Lady Linroſe.

Oh Benſeley! mention not her name! (covering my face with my hands as if terrified at the idea of beholding her.)

Good heavens! my Lord, what do you mean?

I mean, that ſhe has not, and *never*, *never* could have had a title to that name.

God in heaven! what do you tell me? exclaimed he in horror. What is it you force me to ſuſpect?

Talk not on this ſubject, cried I; I am unable to bear it. Would to God that the earth could open under my feet and ſwallow within its bowels a wretch unworthy to crawl on its ſurface.

For heaven's ſake endeavour to compoſe yourſelf, my dear Linroſe, cried he. But where do you intend going?

I anſwered, to town; where I could more eaſily bury myſelf from the world, and hide my head from every eye that had a chance of recognizing me.

Benſeley then entreated me to moderate the tranſports of my deſpair, and to walk forward towards a village, where horſes could be provided. This he could not for ſome time prevail on me to attempt; but at laſt, the deſire of ſecluding myſelf induced me to wiſh to be in London as ſoon as poſſible; and we made the moſt of our way till we approached near the village. My friend, though afraid to leave me by myſelf in that ſituation of mind, after vainly

ſtriving

ſtriving to calm the tumults of my diſtraction, and receiving my ſolemn promiſe to attempt no act of violence in his abſence, then departed to provide a poſt chaiſe from the inn. I confeſs that had not my oath withheld my arm when I was left alone, I was hardly enough maſter of myſelf to have reſiſted the temptation of putting a period to my exiſtence: but Benſeley, who dreaded the wildneſs of my deſpair, haſtened the execution of his orders, and ſoon returned to me in the carriage.

We travelled poſt, for my friend would not deſert me in that moment of affliction, and procured lodgings the moſt private in an obſcure part of the city. Inſtead of upbraiding me, he performed unceaſingly the kindeſt offices of friendſhip; and perceiving me ſufficiently penetrated with a ſenſe of the criminality and weakneſs of my conduct, and entirely overpowered by the calamities which had reſulted from it, not to myſelf alone, but to thoſe I paſſionately loved, and indeed to all who were connected with me, he not only forbore to probe my wounds too ſeverely, but exerted himſelf to plan what ſteps I ought next to purſue; and I, who was unable to think for myſelf, received a feeble ray of ſatisfaction on finding I ſtill poſſeſſed a friend who would not abandon me, and that my crimes had not made this earth completely a deſert to me.

Immediately on my arrival, I was ſeized with a violent fever attended with a delirium, in the intervals of which I heartily wiſhed the diſeaſe might prove the termination of all my diſtreſſes. My friend who never quitted my bed ſide, on this occaſion wrote, by my deſire, a letter to my father, acquainting him with my ſitu-

ation;

ation, and confeſſing to him every circumſtance of my miſconduct. This I had no intention now of concealing; and a full confeſſion of the truth, in my ſituation, was the only virtue I could teſtify. Benſeley informed him, that unable to ſhew my face to the world, or again to meet the eyes of the woman I had ſo unpardonably, ſo irreparably injured, from the violence of a paſſion which knew no bounds and would give way to no reſtraints, and ſenſible that I merited only ſcorn and abhorrence from her, I was firmly determined, ſhould I recover, which was an event he well knew I heartily wiſhed never might take place, to ſpend the remainder of my days in a foreign country, and to bury myſelf in ſolitude and obſcurity, where my name ſhould be unheard of and my crimes unknown.

To this my father returned an anſwer dictated by all that reſentment I had ſo juſtly incurred. He deſired Benſeley to inform me, that my offences were of a nature that reflected not only infamy on myſelf but diſgrace and contamination on all who had the misfortune of being allied to me: that he had endeavoured all in his power, not from regard to my fate but from anxiety to preſerve the family honour untarniſhed, to perſuade the farmer and his wife to ſilence, in hopes that the horrid train of iniquity which had led to ſuch calamities, might be at leaſt in part a ſecret from the world: but the old people, above being either bribed or ſoothed into this meaſure, held their determination unalterable of vindicating the injured fame of their deceaſed daughter, and were in poſſeſſion of ſufficient evidence to prove the truth of that unmanly and deteſtable tranſaction: that for his part, he could not help approving their inflexi-

bility,

bility, and was not even certain if he was juſtifiable in having attempted to ſkreen a wretch, though his own ſon, from the aſſured conſequences of blaſted and irretrievable honour, which ever receives its due puniſhment in the contempt, abhorrence, and deſertion of the world; and which being driven from ſociety and ſhunned by mankind, is forced to hide its miſerable head in obſcurity, where not one ray of comfort alleviates the juſt though rigorous ſentence.

Happy had it been, continued his Lordſhip, for his whole family, had he breathed his laſt ere he caſt ſo foul a ſtain on all connected with him. As to his preſent illneſs, all that can be wiſhed for by his unfortunate relations is, that time may be granted him to repent of the many evils into which his miſconduct has involved them and himſelf. He next mentioned Lady Linroſe. My dear Lady Linroſe! At the ſound of her name I ſhuddered. Let me know no further, cried I to Benſeley, whom I had conſtrained unwillingly to read aloud the letter to me: yet the next morning my anxiety being inſupportable, I inſiſted on hearing all. She had been violently ill, had been given over by her phyſicians, and was ſtill in the moſt alarming ſituation, though for the preſent the fever appeared to have given way to medicine. But what was even ten thouſand times worſe than this, and rendered me abſolutely frantic with deſpair, her mind no leſs than her tender frame had ſuffered. She never had been herſelf ſince that fatal, that accurſed day. If the wretch, ſaid my father in his letter, is inſenſible to the many ſhocking calamities which his crimes have produced, you may add to the liſt that of having driven to madneſs the loveliеſt and moſt amiable of her ſex.

In

In the ſtate I then was, it may eaſily be concluded that a ſevere relapſe could not fail to be the conſequence of this dreadful information; and it was more than once my intention to put a final period to my exiſtence by my own hand; but Heaven interpoſed to ſave me from an action which would have filled up the meaſure of my iniquities, and my friend at length brought me to a more temperate frame of mind.

During this period, an old ſervant, who is ſince dead, whom I had ever conſidered more on the footing of a friend than a domeſtic, as he had once known better days, and had attended me from my youth, contrived, by what means I know not, to diſcover the place of my concealment. He had been left with the reſt of my attendants at the Caſtle: but on hearing of my miſconduct, eaſily conjecturing my ſituation, his faithful attachment determined him to find me out, and to entreat my acceptance of his attendance in whatever part of the globe I ſhould fix my reſidence. He had in ſome particular inſtances regarded himſelf as under peculiar obligations to me; and with a gratitude and fidelity rarely to be met with in higher and more refined ſpheres, reſolved to attach him to me. By his means I learnt every minute circumſtance of the death of your mother, and all the particulars which preceded that diſmal event. He had gained his intelligence from the woman who poſſeſſed the cottage; and anſwered my interrogatories with an accuracy which I never ſhould have received from other hands, and which muſt have augmented my deſpair, had that been poſſible.

As ſoon as I was able to reaſon or reflect with any ſort of compoſure, Benſeley brought you, my beloved

beloved children, to me, which was indeed the only ſhape which comfort could have aſſumed to touch my heart. The ſight of my Hermione, whoſe countenance recalled her injured mother ſtrongly to my mind, and in whoſe infant features the expreſſion of her mother's ſweetneſs and her virtues were ſtrikingly marked, brought the ſoothing relief of tears, the firſt that deſpair had permitted to flow; and the only idea which afforded any thing like ſatisfaction to my ſoul, was the reſolution of retiring abroad with my children, and devoting the reſt of my life to their education; to fortify their minds with ſuch principles as might deter them from guilt and deliver them from calamities like their father's. This employment I conſidered as the only ſatisfaction I could offer to the memory of your unfortunate mother, and I flatter myſelf that if ſhe could look down, it would give her angelic mind pleaſure even in paradiſe, to behold me inſtilling into the minds of her children, ſentiments congenial with her own.

This determination my father approved, and informed Benſeley, who acted as agent between us, that he would ſettle an annual penſion upon me, for which I was to ſign a formal reſignation of all claims to what might have devolved to me at his death, and which would ſpare him the mortification of dreading any litigation in future between me and my brother, who on this diſmal event had been reinſtated in his Lordſhip's favour, and with his wife and a numerous family, were recalled from Ireland, the place of his conſtant reſidence ever ſince his limited finances had conſtrained him to leave the army.

I ſtipulated, in place of the penſion, for twenty

twenty thouſand pounds; which ſum was placed in the funds, and the annual intereſt has been remitted to me by Benſeley ſince my reſidence here, with all the zeal of ſincere friendſhip. Through his means I made enquiry alſo about my little infant boy, whoſe birth had been marked by events ſo dreadful; and had the misfortune to learn that he ſurvived not above a fortnight, and the old people mourned their daughter's death once more in the loſs of the child ſhe had bequeathed to their care.

To that miſerable old couple, whoſe days I had loaded with unmitigated ſorrow, I remitted every year a certain ſum, by unknown hands, being conſcious that from the hated hands of the murderer of their child, they never would have accepted the gift. But within five years after my departure, Benſeley informed me that the penſion was no longer neceſſary; a fever having carried off the old man in his ſeventieth year, and his wife followed him a few months after.

My melancholy relation now draws towards a concluſion: for as ſoon as my illneſs would admit of a removal, I bid adieu to England for ever. It was not, you may eaſily conceive, my children, without feelings unſpeakably painful, that I departed; nor without a tear which wrung my heart, that I was ſeparated from Benſeley. Though tenderly attached to you both, the only ties which connected me with mankind, you were but in infancy; and your innocent pratling, intereſting as it was to the partial ears of a father, could yet but ill ſupply the ſociety of a friend tried and approved. With a mind ſo unfitted for reflection, my ſolitude muſt at firſt have been inſupportable, had I not regarded every pang I endured as a juſt

penance

penance for offences hardly to be expected, and never to be forgotten.

Submiſſion to Heaven, and a proper ſenſe of that religion which leads even the greateſt criminals to truſt for pardon if penitent, has ſupported me, and my ſufferings have now ſubſided into a ſettled melancholy; which at times has even ſomething not unpleaſing in it, and which admits of all the rational comforts of life, in the enjoyment of the ſociety of my children, and even a delight in contemplating the ſucceſs of my labours for their improvement. But theſe ſatisfactions muſt ever be mixed with that allay which remembrance mingles with every riſing conſolation. This temper renders my company little amuſing to thoſe whom accident has introduced to my acquaintance, and on the other hand wholly unfits me for intercourſe with the world; ſo that I have continued to live from choice in a retirement which has been only once enlivened by a kind viſit of ſome months from my dear Benſeley, and within theſe two years by the agreeable ſociety of my friend Mr. Howard, whoſe acquaintance and friendſhip I regard as a ſignal favour from Heaven to ſoothe and conſole me. He has indeed beguiled many a lonely hour by the mild good ſenſe of his converſation—hours which otherwiſe would have proved diſmal and irkſome; for where reflection gives no comfort, time fails of its uſual power of lulling pain.

Immediately on my departure, I aſſumed the name of Seymour, that no trace might remain to lead any of my former acquaintance to the knowledge of my abode. Even the good woman Mrs. Benton, whom Benſeley procured to take charge of you as governeſs, knew me but under

under that borrowed appearance, and was ignorant to her death of the truth. That event which happened ſome years after I ſettled at B——, obliged me unwillingly to ſend you to the convent of —— for further inſtruction in the different branches of education, inſtead of ſupplying her loſs by another tutoreſs in the ſame line; for though this might have been perhaps procured, I knew not where to apply: Benſeley was not at that time in a ſituation, from various circumſtances, to exert himſelf in finding a perſon properly qualified, and he was the only one on whom I could rely in a matter of ſuch infinite moment.

I did not think myſelf at liberty to deprive either of you of the little accompliſhments of your ſex; the principal advantages reſulting from which are the amuſement they beſtow in ſolitude; neither did I conſider it as allowable to ſeclude you from forming thoſe ſoft ties and delightful connections of friendſhip, with girls of your own age, which are the growth of that happy period of our lives and almoſt belong ſolely to it; while on the other hand, beſides parting from you for ſo long a ſpace of time, I was under great apprehenſions leſt your infant minds ſhould be tinged, during your abode in the monaſtery, with the errors of the catholic perſuaſion.

I determined, however, to place you there for two years, and I bleſs Heaven I have had reaſon in no reſpect to regret the ſacrifice I made for Hermione's improvements, nor ſhall I, I truſt, in future for that of my dear Fanny.

I am now come to the concluſion of my painful recital. Adieu! my beloved children! when theſe lines are preſented to your view, I truſt

truſt you will draw that veil over my errors, with which affection ever ſoftens and obſcures the perception of the faults of thoſe we love. I do not wiſh you to excuſe my conduct: do not attempt it; for of none will it admit. Abhor my crimes; but try to diſtinguiſh your father from his tranſgreſſions, and preſerve if poſſible for my memory, that unabated tenderneſs and duty which have conſtituted the ſole conſolation of a life worn out with remorſe, and devoted to repentance—a repentance, the ſincerity of which Heaven, I truſt, has accepted.

Should the Almighty take me to himſelf before you have engaged yourſelves protectors in the married ſtate, my friend Benſeley has faithfully engaged to be a ſecond parent to you: to him, therefore, I bequeath you; and I deſire that you may ever regard him as my ſucceſſor in your obedience and affections. On him you may ſafely rely, who would have ſaved your father from deſtruction had he profited from his example, and who ſaved him from deſpair though he ſlighted and neglected it. I am not without hopes that your grandfather, though too juſtly irritated againſt me, may through my friend's medium receive you to his favour, when the idea of my exiſtence no longer diſturbs the repoſe of his declining days; and I encloſe a letter to him, which I deſire may be preſented by your own hands.

Once more adieu, my beloved children! may the great God of Heaven graciouſly attend to the prayers I daily pour forth for your integrity and welfare; and may he ever defend you under the ſhadow of his wings from harm and calamity; but above all, from thoſe which reſult from miſconduct. LINROSE.

LET-

LETTER II.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

SEPT. 26, ——.

I HAVE received your kind letter, my beloved friend; the moſt agreeable circumſtance that could have befallen me at preſent, when my heart, exhauſted and depreſſed, can imbibe conſolation or relief from the tender ſympathy of friendſhip alone.

How juſt are your reflections, my Sophia, on our dear father's unhappy ſtory. Surely a ſenſe ſo rigorous of his errors, and ſo many years devoted to penitence and remorſe, muſt not only have entirely obliterated his faults in the eyes of infinite juſtice and mercy, but ought to render every candid mind compaſſionate and indulgent to tranſgreſſions which conveyed ſo ſeverely their own puniſhment.

What a number of circumſtances, unheeded at the time, do Fanny and I now recall, that prove how bitterly he ſuffered. The gravity and ſeeming auſterity of his manners, which you uſed to ſay made him appear ſo awful that you never could feel at eaſe in his preſence, we concluded merely conſtitutional: alas! we ſuſpected not that his melancholy had a ſource ſo deep, nor that a weight of painful recollections gave a heavineſs to his heart, which deprived every enjoyment of its true reliſh, and could not fail to throw a gloom over his whole appearance; eſpecially in the eyes of my gay, animated Sophia, bleſſed with a mind at eaſe, and in poſſeſſion of all the vivacity which youth, health, and lively ſpirits can produce.

Yet,

Yet, my dear, religion and reſignation had effected in him a mild thoughtfulneſs, which, while it repreſſed gaiety, was far from wholly precluding contentment. His temper was indeed ſo ſerene, ſo amiable, ſo free from all caprice or ill humour, and his converſation ſo inſtructively amuſing, ſo complaiſantly indulgent to all the little whims and wiſhes of his children, that our affection for him, warm and unbounded, was untinctured with dread or awe; and we ever regarded him in the light of an agreeable and entertaining companion, while we revered him as that of a condeſcending and reſpectable parent.

Has not the woeful tale drawn tears from you, my dear? As for Fanny and myſelf, I thought the peruſal would have actually killed us. Oh! what a number of dreadful events, unſuſpected and unknown; what a ſource of never ceaſing regret, has it opened to our knowledge; and what a period of miſery have the days of our dear father proved! ought we then to weep his releaſe from a world where ſorrow, under various ſhapes, had been his conſtant purſuer, and where, under the baneful form of remorſe, it conducted him to the grave?

I hope my Sophia has not been uneaſy at the unuſual interval of ſilence, after the laſt diſmal part of my journal, which I think I ſent off about ſix weeks ago. The truth is, I have had a ſevere relapſe ſince that period. Nervous fevers are, you know, extremely liable to return when one concludes the alarm over, and caution unneceſſary; and this fit of illneſs was not only attended but produced by a dejection of ſpirits ſo depreſſing, that I am aſtoniſhed I have been able to ſurvive what I have ſuffered. This

laſt

laſt attack was indeed ſo violent, that my phyſicians thought me for ſeveral days in extreme danger, and ſhook their heads in ſilence, while poor Fanny gave me up for loſt.

It has pleaſed the Almighty, however, to reſtore me; though I am yet ſo languid that I ſcarce feel as if I had exiſtence: but I am infinitely better than I could have conceived poſſible in ſo ſhort a ſpace; and the relief Fanny's mind has received from this event, has almoſt wholly recovered her uſual good ſpirits: her terrors on my accouut, by dividing her attention and engroſſing her anxiety, have abſtracted her thoughts from the paſt, and her eſcape from a ſtill greater calamity, for ſuch undoubtedly my death muſt have proved at this juncture, when we are left in a manner deſerted and alone, has produced a wonderful change in her dejection. Her timidity of temper, even to helpleſſneſs, renders her ſo dependant on me, and ſo totally unfits her for ſtruggling againſt the difficulties of our unconnected ſituation, that my loſs could be felt at no period ſo ſeverely as the preſent.

I have conſidered ſome points in her temper, however, as very fortunate at this melancholy ſeaſon; when to have endured the burthen both of her ſorrows and my own, would have proved a weight under which my ſpirits muſt have completely ſunk; but though exceedingly ſuſceptible of ſtrong agitations in the firſt moments of emotion, Fanny's feelings, probably from their violence, are extremely apt to evaporate, and when diſſolved in tears and melted by affliction, the ſoothing of a friend, and a few unavailing arguments of comfort, ſeldom fail to wipe them very ſpeedily away.

The ſenſations of ſixteen, are in general I believe of this nature: acute but tranſient. I perceive my Sophia ſmiles at the important airs of ſeniority which in this laſt ſentence I ſeem to aſſume: but two years difference of age, at our time of life, claims more than will perhaps be admitted at any other period; and Fanny's reſidence at the convent, from which ſhe returned but a few months ago, and the ſecluſion that preceded it, have given an inexperienced ſimplicity to her converſation, and an innocent *naivetè* to her manners, which, though amiable and engaging, beſtow ſometimes an appearance of childiſhneſs that might lead one to conclude her ſtill younger than ſhe is.

Sept. 28.

Madam de Clarence viſited us this morning. It is ten days ſince ſhe arrived in our neighbourhood, though we had not ſeen her: but ſhe ſent many kind and friendly enquiries to know how we were going on, and informed us, in a ſhort note, that indiſpoſition alone could have prevented her from perſonally condoling with us on our bitter diſtreſs.

She expreſſed, in ſtrong terms of affection, the warmeſt ſympathy; and aſſured us, that had not a diſorder ſimilar to mine confined her to bed, ſhe would have flown to afford us what ſupport and conſolation a warm participation in our feelings could beſtow.

You know this lady is one of the few acquaintances whoſe company and converſation our dear parent was ambitious of our obtaining, and who, on her part, has always been ſo kind

as

as to ſolicit our's whenever her chateau afforded gaiety and amuſement.

She wept at the news of our intended departure for England. Alas! ſaid ſhe, your worthy father always told me, that in the event of his death the remainder of the days of his children would moſt probably be ſpent in their native country with his friends; who, though diſpleaſed, as he has often hinted, at ſome part of his conduct, he doubted not would require your preſence, and proffer their protection when he was no more.

Her kindneſs made our tears flow profuſely; but I thought myſelf only at liberty to inform her, that my father had indeed very near relations in his own country, (and mentioned his brother though not by name) to whom he had recommended us: adding, that though he had been ſo unlucky himſelf as to diſoblige his family, we were in hopes they would not prove ſo cruel and unrelenting as to viſit the ſins of the fathers upon the children.

You carry a recommendation in your countenances, my dear girls, ſaid ſhe, kindly, the force of which few hearts can be hardened enough to withſtand. My prayers ſhall follow you wherever you go; and I hope you will have the goodneſs now and then to inform me, that they have not been offered up in vain.

She then departed, having exacted a promiſe that we would be her gueſts for a few weeks previous to our quitting France for ever.

Madam de Clarence is indeed the only individual, now your amiable aunt exiſts no more, beſides our good old Superior and ſome of the ſiſters in the convent, whom on this occaſion I can regret parting with; as ſhe is the only per-

ſon with whom my father's ſolitary plan of life has allowed of our forming an intimacy. Independent of the vicinity of her chateau to B———, the warm affection with which I loved her amiable daughter, our young convent friend, originally prepoſſeſſed her in my favour; and ſince her death, the worthy and afflicted mother appears to have transferred to me that maternal tenderneſs, which can exert itſelf no longer for the happineſs of my friend.

My father had the beſt opinion both of her heart and underſtanding; and ſhe alone (your dear aunt excepted, whoſe loſs I hourly lament) poſſeſſed ſuch influence over his mind as to obtain for us a few days amuſement at her chateau once or twice a year: an indulgence which his reſpect for her character induced him to grant; but which he always granted unwillingly, and under apprehenſion that a taſte for gaiety, ſo natural to youth, imbibed in ſuch agreeable ſociety, might render our uſual abode, on our return, languid and uncomfortable.

Short, indeed, were theſe intervals of feſtivity, and they generally paſſed like a gay hour away. I uſed conſtantly to count the days till ſpring returned; which ſeaſon always brought our amiable friend from the diſſipation of Paris to our peaceful neighbourhood. But unlike, alas! was her laſt arrival to thoſe which had preceded it! Her beloved daughter accompanied her not! and on my firſt viſit to the unfortunate mother, my unrepreſſed ſympathy and affliction cemented a tender tie between us, which induced her almoſt to adopt me in the place of the amiable child, whom death had torn from her boſom.

I am

I am convinced, had lingering illneſs afforded my father time for ſuch a confidence, Madam de Clarence would have been intruſted with his ſecret; and that to her care and tenderneſs he would have recommended his children.

Sept. 30.

I am ſure it will give my Sophia pleaſure to learn, that in our unfriended ſituation, the worthy Mr. Howard has moſt conſcientiouſly fulfilled the promiſe exacted from him by my father in his dying moments. Having performed the laſt ſad duties to that dear and beloved parent, he exerted himſelf to ſupport and conſole poor Fanny, who felt herſelf, during my illneſs, on the brink of becoming a ſolitary being in the midſt of the univerſe. He wrote, immediately on my father's death, to Mr. Benſeley who is nominated our guardian unleſs Lord Belmont condeſcends to take that truſt on himſelf; and having informed him of our irreparable loſs, added, that as we were committed to his charge, we expected from his hand to learn what plan of life we were now to purſue.

Mr. Benſeley's anſwer arrived ſome time ago, and along with it a long letter addreſſed to me, which I was not however permitted to peruſe till within theſe few days. He begins by lamenting in the moſt feeling manner, the ſevere ſtroke we have met with, and receives, he ſays, the truſt bequeathed him as the moſt valuable legacy my father could have beſtowed.

I have had the inexpreſſible misfortune, ſays he, to bury within theſe few months an amiable

ble and beloved wife, with whom I might have lived in a ſtate of the moſt perfect felicity that this world can offer, had I not allowed an ungrateful anxiety for one denied bleſſing to diſturb my peace and cloud all my other enjoyments. Heaven had left me but one wiſh ungranted—the want of family: and I was ſo blind and impious, as to allow an unreaſonable chagrin on this account to ſour my reliſh for the many pleaſures which remained. At length I beheld myſelf on the eve of having my anxious deſire gratified: my wife brought into the world a ſon; but expired in giving birth to her infant, who ſurvived her but a few days; and I am taught the duty of contentment at the ſevere price of finding myſelf bereaved of all earthly felicity.

I receive, he adds, the children of my friend, as ſent to conſole me for my misfortunes. I intend to adopt them for my own, and I hope, while I religiouſly fulfil my part of their father's will, they will not be negligent in the performance of the duties that belong to them; but will regard me in the ſoothing light of a parent, in which my late friend has introduced me to their acquaintance.

Haſten then to England my dear children, concludes he. I hope you will have no objection to join the family of an infirm old man, who, though depreſſed by grief, and racked by the ailments and infirmities incident to a feeble conſtitution and declining years, preſerves the utmoſt tenderneſs and indulgence for youth. I truſt your friend, Mr. Howard, will tranſact all the neceſſary buſineſs that ought to have employed your guardian, had he been able to have ventured on ſo long a journey; an exertion which

which bad health and debilitude totally prevent him from attempting; perhaps, if Mr. Howard means not to remain abroad for any length of time, he may even contrive to accompany you to your native country, and deliver up in ſafety his charge to the old friend who impatiently expects their arrival.

Is not this indeed acting the part of a parent, my dear Sophy? what an amiable and engaging old man Mr. Benſeley muſt be! I long extremely to ſee him, and anxiouſly wiſh to endeavour, by the utmoſt duty and attention, to ſoothe his ſorrows, and to render his old age comfortable and happy. Though we never, never can ſupply the place of what he has loſt, may not the ſociety and attachment of two young girls, anxious to pleaſe and willing to ſubmit to all his little humours, gratify and amuſe him, although we may not be able ſufficiently to intereſt his affections? I hope ſo at leaſt. I am ſure I ſhall feel infinite ſatisfaction in performing a thouſand little ſervices to him, from the idea that my father ſo earneſtly wiſhed us to regard him as his repreſentative.

Oh, Sophia! what ſtrange reverſes have two ſhort months produced! what a revolution in my mind! to leave B—— the abode of our youth—and to leave it without the ſmalleſt proſpect of ever viſiting it again; where every ſurrounding object, the very trees which rear their lofty heads ſo high before the window at which I am writing, appear in the light of old friends who claim a tear at parting.

While I continue in this ſpot, where we have ſo conſtantly enjoyed my dear father's preſence, though I miſs him every moment, I cannot help fancifully feeling that I am not quite deprived.

prived of him. 'Tis loſing all that remains of him, to leave this his conſtant reſidence, where every thing I ſee is connected with his idea. Yet how gloomy, how languid does every thing around appear! perhaps remembrance will be leſs painful when I am not ſurrounded by ſcenes which recall him perpetually to my mind in the moſt endearing views.

Fanny and I have upbraided ourſelves more than once for theſe ungrateful complaints, which during our private walks we uſed ſometimes to indulge, on being ſo wholly excluded ſociety, and in a manner detached from the reſt of our ſpecies. Alas! we are thoroughly puniſhed for our folly; for never till now did we feel what ſolitude was. Our books, work, muſic, drawing, and a thouſand other amuſements, and that which we reliſhed above them all—the converſation of our dear and indulgent parent, made the day ever appear too ſhort for the innocent pleaſures it beſtowed. How different, alas! is the preſent, when his loſs ſheds a gloom on every hour, and time creeps with a dreary languid pace, becauſe we carry to every employment no ſpirits for exertion, and minds unfitted for entertainment.

Indeed I can give no reaſon for theſe diſcontented ideas having occurred to our minds, one excepted, which I ought to bluſh to confeſs, though I really believe it was the original ſource of an eager deſire to ſee ſomething more of the world than our way of life and my father's rules had hitherto permitted.

You muſt know, that at the convent Fanny was extremely intimate with a young girl, much about her own age, who was very gay, very enterprizing, and very fond of novels. That ſpecies of reading you know was prohi-

bited

bited, and no books of a romantic nature admitted within the grate. Fanny's young friend, however, contrived, through means of an indulgent relation who lived in the town, to be privately ſupplied with abundant gratification of this kind, and unknown to every one but Fanny, who ſoon imbibed the ſame taſte, uſed to devour with eagerneſs all the fabulous ſtuff ſhe could get conveyed into the convent. Fanny alone was in the ſecret, the fruits of which ſhe ſufficiently enjoyed, till one unlucky day, when ſome of the nuns unfortunately diſcovered the *Payſanne Parvenue* cunningly hid beneath the quilt of her bed; and after a ſevere puniſhment having been inflicted for the tranſgreſſion, care was taken to prevent all poſſibility of its being repeated.

During a few days which Fanny paſſed at V——, in her way home, ſhe contrived to expend all her pocket money on purchaſes of novels; and Madam de Clarence, who had undertaken to bring her thither, perceiving her fondneſs for this kind of reading, preſented her with ſeveral in vogue, ſo that on her arrival ſhe brought with her a little library of romance, which opened a field entirely new to me, and which was ſo inſinuating to a perſon whoſe amuſement depended ſo much upon books as mine had ever done, that though my father diſapproved our ſtudies, it was not unuſual for Fanny and I to retire to our favourite ſeat in the wood, and unknown to him employ ourſelves for hours in this forbidden reading.

I recollected that it was not till after the reading theſe fallacious relations of the univerſal and uncontrouled empire of love, and the alluring recitals of conqueſt, vanity, and fame, that Fanny and I began to ſuſpect my father's deſcription of life to be the effects of ſingularity

of temper and taſte: to own the truth however, theſe emotions of regret on being deprived of our chance for a ſhare in theſe pleaſures, were but tranſient and left very little impreſſion on our minds.

Oct. 4.

I am now almoſt perfectly recovered, my dear; and have been out more than once airing with Fanny, who is now as cheerful as ever, and talks of our journey to England (which is to take place as ſoon as I am able for ſuch an undertaking) not only without uneaſineſs, but even with eagerneſs. A natural ſenſation of ſorrow ſometimes takes a momentary poſſeſſion of her ſpirits at the idea of leaving Languedoc; yet the proſpect of ſhifting the ſcene amuſes and delights her. Happily for her it is not her turn of mind to view evils before they actually arrive; and ſhe is totally blind on this occaſion to the many mortifications and difficulties in which our change of reſidence muſt involve us, and with which it is ſo intimately connected: for can we reaſonably hope, Sophia, that our appearance will not revive the remembrance of all the unhappy circumſtances of our birth? will not all our dear father's misfortunes again prove the topic of the idle and cenſorious, and muſt not we on that account prove a ſubject for criticiſm, curioſity, and obſervation?

Can we even expect that our grand-father, ſo ſeverely exaſperated againſt his ſon, and of courſe prejudiced unfavourably towards us, will be induced to regard, with an eye of indulgence, two girls whoſe unwiſhed for arrival muſt renew all the pangs which this dreadful affair has coſt him?

him? Perhaps an advanced age, and length of time, may have lulled his ſorrows to reſt; perhaps too the world, occupied by other matters, may almoſt have forgotten an event that once "fed its appetite for ſcandal;" how unwelcome then muſt an event prove, which awakens ſo cruelly Lord Belmont's remembrance, and revives the ſtain which he wiſhes to bury in eternal oblivion!

How can we then flatter ourſelves that we, who unexpectedly appear only to wound and chagrin him, ſhall be properly acknowledged and ſupported? Oh no! my Sophia, he will abandon and deſert us: or, thinking it excuſable to make his grandchildren a ſacrifice to family pride and family honour, he will plunge us into obſcurity; where, entirely dependant on his will, we muſt languiſh out our days unnoticed and unknown.

You will accuſe me, I know, of carrying my gloomy conjectures greatly too far; for while Mr. Benſeley lives we can never know the want of a protector: but if Lord Belmont perſiſts, which I think far from improbable, in forbidding our claim to his favour, never ſhall we revive the recollection of my father's errors by attempting to prove our identity. This would be a ſtep repugnant equally to delicacy and duty. What a figure, my dear, muſt we then make in a foreign country, for to us it certainly is ſo, ſtrangers and unknown, diſowned by thoſe on whom we ought to depend, and vouched for by Mr. Benſeley alone, who may not ſurvive long; for he is an old man and afflicted with many diſorders.

Fanny is blind to all thoſe evils which ſhe calls imaginary, and upon which I do not expa-

tiate,

tiate, though I gently point them out to her at a diſtance; for I wiſh not to damp her pleaſing hopes; I only deſire to fortify her mind againſt the gloomy reverſe which is conſtantly before my own eyes, but which I hope is partly the effect of dejection. She cannot help flattering herſelf, ſhe ſays, that natural affection may work ſo powerfully in Lord Belmont's breaſt, as to induce him gladly to receive us as his grandchildren, and anticipates, with all the vivacity of a lively imagination, that happy moment when we may embrace the venerable parent who yet ſurvives.

Indeed the accounts which Mr. Howard gives us of Lord Belmont, in ſome meaſure authoriſe theſe ſanguine hopes. He tells us, that though he never was himſelf in his company, he is well acquainted with his general character, which is that of being ſtrictly and uniformly a man of honour and integrity. Though in his temper proud, ſtern, and inexorable, theſe blemiſhes are counterbalanced by great humanity and much warmth of affection; and though the auſterity and formality of his manners render his ſociety little courted, except by his particular friends, he is adored by his ſervants and dependants, and, if not beloved, is univerſally reſpected by the world.

A ſtrict regard to juſtice, ſays Mr. Howard, which is thought to influence Lord Belmont's mind in a ſuperior degree, ought undoubtedly to induce him to acknowledge the daughters of his eldeſt ſon; who, both from their ſex and peculiarity of ſituation, lay particular claim to his protection; but how pride and prejudice, which form no inconſiderable feature of his Lordſhip's character, may prompt him on the other hand,

to

to act, is doubtful. However, certain it is Mr. Benſeley will not relinquiſh his title to be your ſole director, unleſs my Lord engages to receive you as he ought.

I confeſs I am afraid this is a meaſure not likely to be taken: but we muſt patiently wait the event. From Mr. Howard we have likewiſe learnt ſome further particulars relative to our own family. Though perſonally unacquainted with any of the individuals of it, he has ſeen ſeveral of them, and remembers well this dreadful affair being for ſeveral months the topic of univerſal diſcuſſion. How little, ſaid he, did I afterwards ſuſpect my friend, Mr. Seymour, to be the man whoſe fate had occaſioned ſuch various reports and conjectures!—Moſt people, it ſeems, believed him dead of the illneſs which had followed the diſcovery: and this rumour was probably ſpread, or at leaſt tacitly confirmed by his friends; who muſt have regarded it as the moſt likely means of putting a ſpeedy termination to all curioſity and ſpeculation on the ſubject.

You may believe both Fanny and I anxiouſly enquired if any intelligence relating to the unfortunate Lady Linroſe had ever come to his knowledge. Mr. Howard ſaid, that all he knew was from general report only; but a ſtory which had excited ſo ſtrongly the attention of the public, could ſcarcely be concealed in any of its particulars. Lady Linroſe recovered her intellects, he ſaid, (alas! in ſuch circumſtances, the return of reaſon can hardly be called a bleſſing); but after the ſevere ſhock ſhe had received, finding herſelf unfit for ſociety, ſhe had left England and fixed her abode in the moſt private manner abroad. Mr. Howard next informed

us,

us, that my uncle, whom he had often occaſionally ſeen, had been thoroughly reinſtated, to all appearance, in my grandfather's favour; that he had two ſons, and he believed two if not three daughters, and that in them Lord Belmont's affections were ſaid to be as entirely centered as his wealth muſt neceſſarily be at his deceaſe.

This part of the family then, you may believe, will not look with eyes of partiality on thoſe who have ſome little claim to ſhare in what they may have conceived to be ſolely their own: at leaſt that it is not an unnatural concluſion, and I have drawn it from a hint which Mr. Howard let drop with regard to my aunt, the preſent Lady Linroſe, whom it appears he has heard accuſed of a very avaricious diſpoſition. Unwilling, however, to prejudice us againſt ſo near a relation, he afterwards endeavoured to palliate what ſeemed to have fallen from him through a friendly apprehenſion that ſhe might not be much rejoiced at our appearance and pretenſions.

He even knows we expect, we wiſh for nothing. Contented with what my father has bequeathed us, thankfully would we relinquiſh every further claim, only to be conſidered as Lord Belmont's children, and favoured with his countenance. Fanny, however, who is following my pen, exclaims againſt this moderation, and proteſts ſhe never will conſent to the propoſal. After having been ſo long buried in ſolitude ſhe longs, ſhe ſays, to make *ſome figure in the world*, (I give you her own words) to which our *birth* certainly entitles us; and far from being contented with the mere *notice* of our family, ſhe ſhall not think that Lord Belmont acts up to

his

his character of rigid honour if he does not in all reſpects place us on a footing with our couſins.

However my wiſhes with regard to ſociety may have at times coincided with Fanny's, yet I never could comprehend what delight *figuring* in the world, as ſhe calls it, was likely to beſtow. Moſt women, I believe, though educated in the moſt ſequeſtered ſolitude, may comprehend with eaſe the gratification reſulting from the devoirs of the agreeable part of the other ſex; for this vanity is probably inherent in our natures, and forms a part of our original conſtruction; but habit has made retirement not only agreeable, but ſo entirely to my taſte, that if ever I have it my power to chooſe my own way of life, I ſhall undoubtedly fix in the country; where I would indeed wiſh my abode to be occaſionally enlivened by the company and converſation of a few amiable people of both ſexes, (an advantage which we have been almoſt totally deprived of hitherto); but no enjoyment can I perceive in a promiſcuous intercourſe, in which the heart has no ſhare.

My ideas of life (is not that your phraſe, my Sophia? who was ever much offended at the ſecluſion in which we were retained), have been imbibed wholly from my dear father, who indeed found it a path ſtrewed with briars, and who, to render us contented with the plan he had adopted, laboured to repreſent the world in its leaſt alluring point of view, as fraught with ſnares, treachery and crimes, where innocence was continually expoſed to danger, and where friendſhip was almoſt unknown. That I have not given implicit faith to this account is entirely owing to my Sophia's livelier picture

of

of ſociety; who, placed in a happier ſphere, feels not nor dreaded the evils which have been perpetually placed before our eyes. The two years I ſpent in the convent, (the remembrance of which I ever bleſs, as it firſt introduced to my heart the knowledge of thoſe ſoft, intereſting, and endearing ties of friendſhip, which never, my Sophia, ſhall time or abſence diminiſh) could not fail to aſſiſt my father's wiſhes on this head.

Is it not ſingular, however, that having been foſtered by the ſame hand, and reared on the ſame plan, Fanny's ideas and mine ſhould prove ſo little ſimilar; and that the proſpect of leaving France and changing our mode of life, ſhould operate ſo differently in our minds.—What in her gives ſpirit to every motion, and life to every look, fills my eyes with tears, and my heart with deſpondency and alarm.

Oh! my Sophia, my deareſt friend, your continued affection alone ſuſtains me under the troubles which at preſent oppreſs my heart; and your journal is, after heaven, my chief, indeed my only conſolation! Although all chance of meeting ſeems at preſent as diſtant as ever, I endeavour to ſupport my ſinking ſpirits with the hope that perhaps this bleſſing may be in wait for me ſooner than I expect; and that though the public capacity in which your father acts at Naples, muſt render that court his uſual reſidence, yet that unforeſeen events may oblige him to viſit England, which fate ſeems to have determined ſhall be the abode of our future days, and in which place, ſince the death of your aunt, I begin to imagine there is infinitely greater probability of ſeeing you than at B—, where you now poſſeſs no longer that venerable relation

relation to induce your father to re-viſit our neighbourhood.

OCT. 6.

I promiſe you faithfully, my dear, to write as you deſire, minutely and ſincerely, every event of my life, in the ſame ſtyle of journalizing which we have continued ſo long. With what trifling occurrences have my epiſtles hitherto been filled: the ſcene now begins to grow more intereſting; Heaven grant that thoſe which follow may be unmarked with any thing extraordinary. The marvellous ever produces agitation, and I am born (conſtitutionally at leaſt) for ſpending my days in what you would call an inſipid tranquillity. It is only for tempers like my Sophia's to live in a court and enjoy its buſtle: ſuch as mine, are calculated only for the ſmooth unruffled paths of life. Fanny partakes ſo much of your turn of mind in this particular, that ſhe is quite elated with all the chimeras of a gay imagination; perpetually repreſenting to herſelf in the livelieſt colours the endleſs enjoyments of birth, affluence, and admiration: alas! never once does it occur to her the ſad ſtigma which has deprived her of theſe advantages hitherto, and which muſt ever caſt a cloud over them in future.

Adieu, my dear. I have an opportunity by a private hand of conveying to you this immenſe packet. 'Tis a friend of Mr. Howard's, who ſets out for Naples from Marſeilles in a few days. Oh how I envy the happy mortal who delivers it to my Sophia!

H. SEYMOUR.

P. S. I have opened my packet to add a few words more. We have juſt received a ſecond letter from our worthy guardian, who informs us of a melancholy event—the death of our uncle, my father's younger brother. Alas! what ſevere wounds has Lord Belmont lived to endure! Heaven in mercy grant that I ſurvive not thoſe I paſſionately love; rather, ah! infinitely rather, may it pleaſe his gracious Providence to take me early in life to himſelf. Yet is not this a ſelfiſh wiſh? What is it indeed but deſiring that my ſufferings ſhould be abridged at the expence of the feelings of my friends?

LETTER III.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

OCT. 9.

YOU aſk me ſeveral queſtions in your letter, which the number of informations I have had to give you, together with the many conjectures and reflections which our preſent ſituation naturally inſpires, have, by engroſſing my pen, prevented me from anſwering: for as I am yet but weak, I am able to write but little at a time, though chatting with you is the only employment that intereſts me. I now ſit down therefore to anſwer your queries.

You aſk me to tell you, in the firſt place, what ſort of man this Mr. Howard is, whom I have dignified ſo often with the epithets of amiable and worthy? you deſire me to acquaint you with the following particulars, viz. his age, fortune,

fortune, manners, and appearance; and mean while you tell me you offer your prayers for his turning out young, handſome, rich, and agreeable; and laſt of all that he may poſſeſs *un coeur tendre*, in which caſe it muſt be out of nature, you ſay, for the youth to have ſpent near three months under the ſame roof with two *ſuch* girls without becoming a ſlave to the charms of one of them.

I am ſomewhat afraid that Mr. Howard has really proved this ſame unnatural being: although he certainly is bleſſed with a very tender heart, and ſeems beſides to have been prejudiced in our favour from the commencement of our acquaintance, which was produced by an accident, of which I am going to inform you, ſince I have neglected my accuſtomed minuteneſs in this particular.

My father one evening, about three years ago, walking in the woods of B——, perceived a very fine horſe, ſaddled, with all its accoutrements, grazing, with the bridle impending from its neck, without any appearance of an owner or attendant being near. Struck with the apprehenſion that he had probably thrown his maſter, my father traverſed the different paths of the foreſt, in order to give him aſſiſtance in caſe it was required, and ſoon was led, by the ſound of diſmal groans, to the ſpot where the unfortunate traveller lay, ſupported by a footman who was endeavouring by his maſter's orders, to pull his arm into joint, which had been diſlocated by his fall.

My father addreſſing himſelf to the ſtranger, who proved to be an Engliſhman, (a circumſtance that perhaps gave force to his natural humanity and benevolence) informed him that his houſe

houſe was but a quarter of a league diſtant, and requeſted he would ſuffer himſelf to be removed to it; where a ſurgeon could be ſoon procured to ſet the bone.

Mr. Howard, for he it was, after thanking my father for his fortunate aſſiſtance, gratefully accepted the offer, and ſent his ſervant, by my father's deſire, to order a carriage to convey him to the houſe, while another meſſenger was diſpatched from B—— for a neighbouring ſurgeon. The operation was happily performed, and I exerted myſelf (Fanny being then at the convent) to render the habitation of the poor invalid as comfortable as his ſituation would permit. He was ſoon able to quit his apartment, and loaded us with acknowledgments for this accidental ſervice; and my father, who rarely admitted company at B——, found himſelf inſenſibly attached to our new acquaintance, and forgot his determination of flying the ſight of his own countrymen in favour of Mr. Howard, who on his part ſoon conceived the warmeſt friendſhip for him.

He acquainted us that bad health had obliged him to try the waters of Barrege; and never having viſited the Continent before, he intended, finding himſelf perfectly recovered, to make the tour of France and Italy before his return to England. He politely added, that he never ſhould regret the interruption his plan had received from this accident, ſince it had been productive of an intimacy that had given him ſo much ſatisfaction.

My father's perſuaſions prevailed with him to lengthen his ſtay for ſeveral weeks after his confinement was at an end; and indeed he proved a moſt agreeable acquiſition to our family

mily party. He then departed, having faithfully promiſed on his return to take B—— in his way; and after an abſence of a year and eight months, he fulfilled his intention, and had been for ſome time our gueſt when my dear father was taken from us.

As to his character, our helpleſs ſituation has developed it to us in the moſt amiable point of view. Steady and ſincere in his attachment to my father, it has been productive of kindneſs and attention to us, beyond what we could have hoped for or claimed from ſo late an acquaintance: yet his friendſhip is teſtified by actions, not by proteſtations; for the modeſty of Mr. Howard's nature is ſuch, that our expreſſions of gratitude never fail to embarraſs and diſtreſs him; and he ſeems to regard the trouble he receives, as a truſt, the faithful diſcharge of which is a duty too indiſpenſable to appear meritorious.

His countenance—(you ſee I go regularly through the liſt of your interrogatories)—without being what one can pronounce handſome, is ſenſible, manly, and intereſting, with an air of mildneſs which prepoſſeſſes you at firſt ſight in his favour, and an expreſſion which of all others is the moſt deſirable—the look of a worthy honeſt character. He would poſſeſs alſo much the appearance of a man of faſhion, or rather of a man who has been accuſtomed to elegant and poliſhed ſociety, did not a certain degree of diffidence and modeſty ſhew that he made not the *grand tour* early enough in life to acquire that eaſe which an introduction into foreign company at a youthful period generally beſtows: but on this head I can only judge from comparing him with ſome of the Pariſian beaux

beaux who occaſionally frequented the chateau de Clarence, and who, however inferior to Mr. Howard in point of underſtanding, I muſt acknowledge were his ſuperiors in addreſs.

Fortune has been, alas! as ſparing as nature ſeems to have been prodigal of her gifts.—Her avarice is by no means apparent in the figure Mr. Howard makes in this country; but he confeſſed to my father that frugality alone enabled him to conceal it. As to his age—(pray do you imagine that my father would have conſigned us to the care of a man of five and twenty?) Mr. Howard adds, I dare ſay, twenty years more to that gay ſeaſon of life.—Time has not, it is true, imprinted any traces in his face which one could wiſh ſpared, for they denote benevolence rather than years: he looks conſiderably younger than he is; and retains that ſpirit in his eye which in his youth would have been probably termed fire, though blended with infinite ſweetneſs. Thus our guardian, you find, is not a giddy inſinuating youth, who might have one day made Fanny and I pull caps; but in fact a plain, worthy, middle-aged man, whoſe attachment is that of a parent not of an admirer.

I will freely confeſs to you however I have ſometimes been led to ſuſpect, from his behaviour, that he wiſhed to render himſelf particularly agreeable to me, and that he originally diſtinguiſhed me beyond my ſiſter; perhaps this was the mere ſuggeſtion of ſecret vanity: if ſo, it was however an error which I by no means wiſhed realized; for ſo much apprehenſion did it give me, that I could not help avoiding his company; and when in it, my manner uniformly teſtified coldneſs and reſerve from the

apprehenſion

apprehenſion that my father, (who always confeſſed that he could not *inſure* the protection of his family after his death, though all other particulars he carefully centered in his own boſom) might be induced to overlook the difference of years from the partiality he entertained for his friend, and might uſe all his influence to prevail with me to accept of a legal protection in that unfriended ſtate to which his deceaſe was ever liable to reduce us.

I now however condemn this abſurd fancy, which I almoſt bluſh to confeſs to you, and which I perceive to have been merely a chimera of my own brain, adopted God knows how, for I think his preference is plainly in my ſiſter's favour, whoſe innocence and ſimplicity of manners appear to have warmly intereſted him. During my illneſs, on Mr. Howard Fanny naturally relied for ſupport, as ſhe had no other to whom ſhe could fly; and his tender, compaſſionate attention ſeems to have cemented a ſort of attachment between them; in *her* mere gratitude alone, and in *him* the kindneſs of a guardian—a *penchant* which from that gentleman's time of life and prudence can never be ſuppoſed to diſturb the tranquillity of either party, but which probably adds ſome ſtrength to his kind activity in our affairs.

As to money matters, about which in your laſt you are ſo kindly anxious, I really underſtand very little of them; but Mr. Benſeley, who has ever had the management of all pecuniary buſineſs hitherto, undertakes to continue the charge. There is, I believe, the ſum of twenty thouſand pounds in the Engliſh funds, and above two hundred piſtoles were found in my father's cabinet for preſent uſe. Debts there are none,

beyond

beyond what a few Louis will diſcharge; ſo that you ſee we are ſecured in affluence, and independence is my utmoſt wiſh.

You aſk me, Sophia, how Fanny, who was a pretty girl of thirteen when you laſt ſaw her, has turned out in point of beauty? When ſhe uſed to viſit us in the convent ſhe was a ſweet looking child in a ſtay coat, and I believe you have not ſince ſeen her: ſhe is now quite formed; and though not much grown, for ſhe is not tall, is extremely improved both in face and form. Her little clumſy figure has ſhot up, and ſhe retains only an agreeable degree of *en bon point*, which it would not perhaps be an advantage for her to loſe even for a finer ſhape. Her complexion is her principal charm, and that is much refined ſince you ſaw her, for her features are more pleaſing than regular. I remember you uſed to admire her blue eyes, and cheſnut hair; but if any thing in her face deſerves the pre-eminence, it is her teeth, which are exceedingly beautiful; and ſhe ſtill preſerves that expreſſion of ſweetneſs and timidity which renders her appearance feminine and intereſting.

She was extremely admired during our laſt viſit at the chateau, and was not a little gratified with the notice ſhe excited from ſeveral young men of faſhion; the firſt time in her life that ſhe had ever been the object of the attentions of the other ſex. After our return home, I could not help remarking that ſhe complained of our ſecluſion with a vexation which was not however of above one day's continuance, but which had been prompted entirely by the young Chevalier de Merville's converſation, who had repreſented it to her as the height of cruelty and injuſtice

injuſtice in my father, and little better than being buried alive.

Perhaps I myſelf, miſled by vanity excited in a ſimilar manner by the flattery of our Pariſian beaux, ſuffered a momentary regret for being deprived of ſo many gay amuſements, the attractions of which were painted in glowing colours by all who had enjoyed them. Alas! my heart is now thoroughly ſenſible of the folly of its wiſhes. In the ſeaſon of affliction our eyes are opened to the vanity of ſuch fallacious ideas. What would I now give to be placed in the very ſituation which in thoſe moments I regretted! Bleſſed with my father's ſociety, to no other would I aſpire; and delighted would I look forward to the proſpect of ſpending my future days for ever at B——. How wiſely then did our dear parent judge in detaining us ſo conſtantly with him. Our minds, I now perceive, were unequal to the temptation of mixing with the world untainted by a deſire for its follies, and never ſhould we have felt a regret, tranſient as it was, on returning to a home enlivened with his preſence, had not his indulgence allowed us to join the gay party at the chateau.

I feel my ſtrength ſo greatly amended, that I think of removing to Madame de Clarence's in a few days. It is but two leagues diſtant: and ſevere as leaving B——— muſt prove, that event is ever before my eyes; and ſince I am now able for it, the ſooner it is over the better. Mr. Howard will remain ſome time behind us; having kindly undertaken to ſettle every thing previous to our journey, in which he is himſelf to accompany us. How fortunate it is for us that he returns at this juncture to England, and what a bleſſing from Providence was this wor-

thy friend's visit to B ——! What else could two unprotected girls have done, totally unacquainted with such transactions, ignorant of the world, and unused even in trifles to act for themselves! We must have been entirely dependant in this case upon Madame de Clarence; who, though extremely kind, might have regarded the charge as rather too great a burthen for us to impose.

OCT. 18.

We yesterday bade adieu to our old dwelling. How severely did I feel the pang of leaving it! and Fanny wept most bitterly at parting with our old domestics. Therese and Dubois have requested leave to attend us to England; and we must endeavour to require their faithful attachment, which has prevailed with them to leave their own country. When the carriage drove down the avenue, I was almost suffocated with a variety of different sensations: the idea of our recent loss was so connected with every thing I left behind, that I felt as if the parting from my father had not till then completely taken place. A number of gloomy reflections assailed me likewise of another nature: we were embarking upon a dangerous and uncertain undertaking; we were going to venture on new scenes, new friends, and to a new country; where we were ignorant of the fate that might await us, and dreaded the reception we might receive.

Late as is the season for travelling, we shall spend a fortnight with Madame de Clarence, who gave us the warmest reception, and as she perceived I was weak, depressed, and unfit for company, kindly insisted that I should take immediate

mediate poſſeſſion of the apartment allotted me, where I indulged alone in many mournful reflections moſt part of the day; for I would not allow poor Fanny to attend me while there was a gay party below, though the dear girl left the ſaloon every quarter of an hour to enquire for me; equally divided between her anxiety on my account and the pleaſing novelty of every thing that ſurrounded her.

On her part, the ſad ſolemnity of quitting B——. had made her cry moſt of the way hither; but the chearful air that reigns here, and the kindneſs which her youthful manners and appearance excited from all the company have chaſed away the vapours that hung over her.

Having no excuſe to abſent myſelf longer, I joined the company this day at breakfaſt, and was introduced by Madame de Clarence to her friends. Theſe conſiſt of an Engliſh lady, who has taken up her reſidence for ſome months paſt in the town of V——, a very lively agreeable little woman of about thirty two; and the Chevalier de Mertane and his brother, two young men of ſplendid fortunes, nearly related to Monſieur de Clarence.

OCT. 19.

Mrs. Weldon, the Engliſh lady, poſſeſſes a flow of ſpirits, which, were mine able to keep pace with hers, would amuſe me extremely. She appears to have taken a ſtrong partiality for Fanny, and told her to-day what a world of conqueſts ſuch a figure as hers muſt gain in London. Fanny, on her part, was, as you may believe, willing enough to give credit to the

flattering compliments, and almoſt immediately after aſked me in a whiſper if I did not think Mrs. Weldon the moſt agreeable woman in the world. I only anſwered by a ſmile, which Fanny perfectly underſtood, for ſhe coloured while ſhe laughed it off.

Mrs. Weldon afterwards attacked her on the gravity of my appearance. She ſeems never to have known what grief or depreſſion means. She did me the honour to ſay that ſhe admired me extremely; but your ſiſter, ſaid ſhe, totally wants the deſire of being thought handſome, which ever improves and often alone conſtitutes beauty in the eyes of the men. I was more gratified however with the defect ſhe had remarked than with the approbation ſhe expreſſed, however injudicious the remark might be, for a certain degree of vanity in pleaſing is I believe natural to all of us. As for the Chevalier, he is about twenty five, and rather good-looking, but finical in the moſt abſurd degree, and ſo attentive, that his politeneſs fatigues inſtead of ingratiates. If you but look round, he enquires with earneſtneſs if there is any thing in which he can have the honour of ſerving you; if you move, he flies to execute your commands; at table, he teazes you with perpetual civilities, and ſtays at home with the ladies the whole morning to aſſiſt in holding their thread while they work, or to preſent his pair of ſciſſors when required; in ſhort he partakes ſo much of the female, that I cannot help wiſhing to ſee him dreſſed in petticoats.

He appears to have centered his whole ideas of happineſs in the vanity of making himſelf agreeable to our ſex: a paſſion, which I am afraid the poor Chevalier can hardly ever find gratified,

gratified, as his plan of pleaſing is unfortunately founded on tormenting every one by unceaſing aſſiduities. He abſolutely ſtuns and overpowers one with compliments ſo outrè and abſurd, that one is at a loſs whether to laugh or be offended. Unluckily he appears to have ſingled me out for the object of his preſent importunities; and although I avoid him as much as is in my power, without being guilty of abſolute rudeneſs, and almoſt never addreſs my converſation to him, he contrives to engage my conſtant attention, and makes me ſuch ridiculous ſpeeches as attract the notice and often the mirth of the company, and put me extremely out of countenance. However, Madame de Clarence always talks of him, and behaves to him with particular regard: a reſpect which I ſhould imagine is alone paid to his rank and immenſe poſſeſſions. Mrs. Weldon ſometimes cannot entirely conceal a little chagrin, at finding I engage an attention which, before my arrival ſhe herſelf wholly engroſſed. Yet it is impoſſible for any mortal to think the Chevalier agreeable: but thoſe women who are guided by a ſpirit for coquetry, poſſeſs, I have been told, an appetite for praiſe, which devours applauſe and admiration without diſtinction, wherever it can be procured; and, if I do not judge hardly, I ſhould ſuſpect this to be in ſome meaſure the caſe with our lively Engliſh acquaintance, whoſe gaiety is not perfectly untinctured with a degree of levity which ſtrikes me as rather bordering on impropriety: but I am myſelf ſo ignorant of the freedom that cuſtom authoriſes widows of a certain age to take, that I ought not to decide ſo unfavourably upon her behaviour, eſpecially on ſo ſhort an acquaintance.

Yeſterday

OCT. 28.

Yeſterday produced an event that has proved extremely diſagreeable. A party in the morning was propoſed, to ramble through the woods, which have not yet loſt their beauty; it conſiſted of the Chevalier, Fanny, myſelf, and Mrs. Weldon; who, piqued at the Chevalier's neglect, (if ſuch a phraſe was ever before uſed by a Lady to the obſequious Chevalier), revenged herſelf by laviſhing all her attentions on his brother, a weak but unaſſuming youth of twenty, who alſo attended us.

We ſoon reached a narrow path in the wood; which allowing only of two walking abreaſt, the Chevalier, who never quitted my ſide, and has been for ſome days paſt more inſupportable than ever, contrived to detain me a little behind the reſt under pretence of pointing out to me an opening through the trees, which conveys a moſt delightful proſpect: he then ſuddenly, in a low voice, beſought me to liſten to the moſt ardent, moſt tormenting, and moſt ſincere paſſion which had ever agitated the human breaſt; and launched out before I could enough recover my ſurprize to anſwer him, into ſuch a ſtrain of far-fetched expreſſions of torture, hope, anguiſh and deſpair, eternal miſery and unſpeakable tranſport, that had not the ſuddenneſs of this unexpected propoſal confounded and embarraſſed me, I ſhould undoubtedly have had a difficulty in refraining from laughing in his face. Not well knowing what to reply, and not inſtantly recollecting myſelf ſufficiently to remember that ſilence may in ſome caſes be conſtrued into approbation, I was redoubling my pace to join the company, when he ſeized my hand to detain me, and kiſſed it with a violence that excited

cited a diſguſt ſo forcible, as enabled me to find inſtantly the uſe of my ſpeech, and on his repeating theſe words—"There can be only one objection, my adorable Mademoiſelle; but I hope you are not obſtinate in the errors of your perſuaſion?"

I made haſte to aſſure him there were innumerable obſtacles, independant of the inſuperable one at which he hinted; and that as they were all equally unſurmountable, I entreated he would mention the ſubject no more.

Such a profuſion of proteſtations, accompanied with confuſed and haſty common-place arguments in favour of the Catholick Church, followed, that I almoſt ran, in my eagerneſs to get rid of him, and taking hold of Mrs. Weldon's arm, he was conſtrained to be ſilent; the only time he has been ſo one quarter of an hour together ever ſince our arrival here.

Mrs. Weldon obſerving his unuſual taciturnity, rallied him on it without mercy; and aſking him if I had been inexorable during our tete-à-tete, laughed ſo violently at his mortified countenance and heſitating anſwers, that the poor Chevalier even bluſhed; as for me, I was ſo extremely indifferent, that this ſubject, too delicate for a hint had another object been concerned, hardly embarraſſed me; but Mrs. Weldon, perceiving that her teazing had all the effect ſhe could wiſh, did not ſpare the Chevalier during the whole day.

OCT. 30.

This morning Madame de Clarence, during breakfaſt, whiſpered me that ſhe wiſhed to talk with me alone; and as ſoon as it was over led me to her dreſſing room, where ſhe informed me,

me, that the Chevalier de Mertane had applied to her on the ſubject of his paſſion.

I have obſerved with pleaſure, ſaid ſhe, his growing attachment ever ſince your firſt arrival, and have inclined to give the Chevalier all opportunities of manifeſting it to you, from the hope that an union ſo deſirable and in every reſpect ſo honourable, may fix my deareſt Hermione for ever in the country which has been ſo long her reſidence, and which ſhe ought to conſider as her own: how then was I hurt and diſappointed, when he laſt night informed me of the ſucceſs his firſt declaration had met with. But I know your objection, my dear, continued ſhe, perceiving I was going to interrupt her; but that objection is not inſuperable, and indeed is my principal motive for promoting this alliance. I can eaſily enter into your feelings, prejudiced as you muſt be in favour of the perſuaſion in which you have been educated, nor will I ſuppoſe for a moment that any advantages of worldly proſperity could induce you to hazard, on this account alone, a perverſion of principles; all I hope from this propoſal of the Chevalier's is, that you will allow ſome of the worthy and learned fathers of the church to converſe with you on the ſubject of religion, that you will hear their arguments in favour of the great truths of the Catholick faith, which carry inſtant conviction as ſoon as they are brought into light, and which in a mind ſo young, ſo candid, and unbiaſſed as yours, cannot fail of ſubduing all your ſcruples, and determining you to place implicit truſt in them.

After expreſſing my gratitude to Madame de Clarence for the kind importunity and warmth with which ſhe intereſted herſelf in my ſpiritual

as

as well as temporal welfare, I aſſured her, in the moſt determined manner, that I was firmly and unalterably reſolved to adhere to the Proteſtant religion. It was a religion, I ſaid, which admitted to my mind neither doubt nor ſcruples: it had been my ſupport in affliction, and was the anchor to which I leant for truſt in every ſucceeding event of my life; and I added, that were this point entirely out of the queſtion, the Chevalier's propoſal, generous and diſintereſted as it was, would have met with the ſame reception.

Various were the pleas, arguments, and intreaties, uſed by this worthy friend to induce me to comply with her wiſh of admitting her confeſſor to converſe with me on the ſubject; but I firmly and determinedly oppoſed it. This is a ſtep, Madam, ſaid I, againſt which my father has particularly cautioned me, and to which I hope you will not think me ungratefully obſtinate if I proteſt I never willingly ſhall ſubmit.

Obſtinate, you force me to pronounce you, cried ſhe with ſome heat, and in all reſpects unaccountable. What reaſonable averſion can you have on the other hand to the Chevalier? perhaps you think he has been too preſuming in confeſſing his wiſhes ſo early: but conſider, he finds himſelf juſt on the eve of loſing you, perhaps for ever. Your intended journey has accelerated his propoſals; and they are of a nature that well deſerve to be conſidered. He is of a noble family, ſplendid fortune, maſter of himſelf, and tenderly attached to you. Perhaps there may be ſome little errors in his manner which you might wiſh corrected; but they are the reſult of good nature, and of a wiſh to pleaſe: perhaps too you may imagine, and with reaſon,

that his underſtanding is inferior to your own; but when you have lived as long in the world and beheld as much of mankind as I have done, you will find this diſadvantage greatly overbalanced by many other circumſtances in favour of this alliance— circumſtances on which I have as yet but lightly touched.

I anſwered Madame de Clarence with all the warmth of gratitude which the kind intereſt ſhe takes in my concerns ſo well merits, but ſincerely avowed that the Chevalier's *little errors* were ſuch as blinded me to the advantages ſhe had pointed out, and intreated that ſhe would mention a ſubject no more, which very fortunately proved in all reſpects diſagreeable to me; ſince the impediment of religion alone was a bar perfectly unſurmountable, even had I wiſhed the union to take place.

Perhaps I ſpoke with a little too much heat; but my impatience had no effect on my amiable friend, who treated all my arguments as the effuſions of bigotry on the one hand, and of romance imbibed in retirement on the other. Finding all ſhe ſaid ineffectual, ſhe diſtreſſed me extremely by calling in her huſband to her aſſiſtance, who joined, out of mere good breeding, to torment me, by repreſenting this odious match as ſplendid and deſirable in the higheſt degree. What! cried Madame de Clarence, to ſettle for life in England? a foreign—at leaſt an unknown country; where you confeſs you have but diſtant relations to receive you, and no certainty of finding friends; and to leave France, where an eſtabliſhment ſo brilliant awaits you, and where you have it in your power to engage for yourſelf and your ſiſter an honourable protector in the married ſtate?

At

At this laſt phraſe, though extremely harraſſed by their expoſtulations and hurt at appearing ſo abſurdly refined, I could not help laughing heartily; in which both Monſieur and his lady joined me, in ſpite of their utmoſt efforts to preſerve their gravity. This convinced me, that their opinion of their relation, in ſpite of their warmth, was pretty much on a footing with my own: indeed, the thoughts of the Chevalier and protection, were two ideas which could not poſſibly be aſſociated without exciting an inclination to ſmile, for his appearance is beyond meaſure effeminate and inſignificant.

Seeing me quite immoveable in my determination, they at laſt gave over their importunities; which proceeding from diſintereſted friendſhip, at once gratified and oppreſſed me.

NOV. 1.

Mr. Howard, who is well acquainted with the family here, paid us this day a viſit from B———. Fanny and I rejoiced to ſee him. He tells us that he has entirely finiſhed all the buſineſs which has hitherto detained him there, and adds, that if we have no particular deſign of protracting our ſtay, he thinks we ought no longer to delay ſetting off, as the ſeaſon is far advanced, and moſt of our baggage is already on its way. We agreed with him as to the neceſſity of our immediate departure; and in ſpite of our worthy friends entreaties, have fixed on the 5th, when we ſhall bid adieu to the hoſpitable chateau.

Yeſterday

NOV. 2.

Yeſterday Madame de Clarence, who is ſteady in her opinion that my everlaſting good is intimately connected with my change of principles, and regards it as a duty indiſpenſable to leave no means untried to convert me, intreated me to allow her confeſſor, a venerable old man, who dined with us, and who I ſuppoſe had been invited for the purpoſe, to converſe with me in private on the ſubject of religion, but I excuſed myſelf, though not without difficulty; and as there was a large company of viſitors, by attaching myſelf to ſeveral ladies and gentlemen, the poor prieſt could not find me one inſtant diſengaged the whole day.

NOV. 3.

The poor Chevalier!—I really think, I ought to be ſorry for him. My continued coldneſs, and viſible endeavours to avoid him, have at length had the deſired effect: he even no longer teizes me with intreaties; but finding that thoſe with which for a day or two he inceſſantly tormented me have gained nothing but encreaſed reſerve and conſtant diſregard, he is now labouring to try if offended pride or pique will be of ſervice to his cauſe; and laviſhes all his attentions on Mrs. Weldon, who on her part receives them with an air of exultation and triumph but ill concealed.

I fancy he hardly expected a refuſal ſo mortifying from an inconſiderate country girl, whoſe alliance could neither reflect luſtre nor importance on his family; and really, according to the prevailing opinions of this quarter

of

of the world, I cannot but admire the diſintereſtedneſs of the Chevalier's propoſal, however diſagreeable it has proved in other reſpects: for a marriage made without eclat, high connections, and ſplendor, I find, by Madame de Clarence, is regarded by the enlightened part of the world as a weakneſs and folly, which ſubject thoſe who are influenced to adopt them to much ridicule and reproach: and thoſe, you may believe, who from an abſurd refinement reject ſuch fortunate contingencies when they preſent themſelves, are laid open to cenſure ten times keener and more poignant.

NOV. 4.

The behaviour of the lively widow really confounds me. I, who am new to the world, and unacquainted with its cuſtoms, can no way reconcile myſelf to that levity which her behaviour, though ſprightly and pleaſing, ſo ſtrongly indicates: yet there is ſomething ſo inſinuating in her addreſs, that one loves and blames her in the ſame moment.

Mr. Howard has written me a line to-day, intimating that he will be here to-morrow evening, and on the morning after we are to depart. He has received, he tells me, another letter from Mr. Benſeley, expreſſing the utmoſt impatience for our arrival.

Adieu! my beloved friend! I ſhall not find opportunity to continue my journal regularly till we are actually in England; do not therefore expect another packet to follow ſo ſoon as uſual, though I know your kind anxiety will induce you to be more deſirous of it than ever.

This

This long, long journey! with what a weight does its oppreſs me! Would it were a joyful undertaking, or an event that promiſed comfort or pleaſure; but our proſpects are at beſt unſatisfactory, and their iſſue wrapt in dark obſcurity. Farewell, my dear Sophia.

H. SEYMOUR.

LETTER IV.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

DOVER, NOV. 29, —.

WE have accompliſhed our journey ſo far, though not without having experienced the perils and alarms incident to travellers. The weather, till our arrival at Calais, was delightful for the ſeaſon, and our journey on the whole infinitely more agreeable, from the beauty and variety of the ſcenes which ſo rapidly ſhifted before our eyes, than I could poſſibly have expected. You may believe, my love, it was not without a bitter pang that we bade adieu to Languedoc, and quitted, probably for ever, the abode of our early days; poor Madame de Clarence too mingled her tears with ours at parting, and charged us to remember her as a friend who ſhould ever prove warmly and deeply intereſted in our happineſs.

When we arrived at Calais, Fanny having been affected with a ſlight cold, attended by a ſore throat, Mr. Howard inſiſted on our remaining a day or two there, before we ventured on the water; and when we were ready to depart,

part, we found no little difficulty in procuring a veſſel, as, owing to adverſe winds, they were all detained on the oppoſite ſhore, one excepted, which with ſome trouble Mr. Howard at length procured. Soon after, as we were preparing to get on board, our landlord entered, and informed us that a gentleman was that moment arrived, who had travelled from Paris with the utmoſt expedition, and was in extreme haſte to get over to England, where buſineſs of real moment required his preſence, but that the circumſtance before mentioned muſt unavoidably detain him at Calais, unleſs we thought proper to offer him a conveyance in our veſſel.

On this information Mr. Howard deſired the landlord to preſent his beſt reſpects to the gentleman, and to acquaint him that we were about to depart immediately, and that if it was agreeable to him to accompany us, we ſhould be extremely happy to accommodate him and his attendants. The gentleman was then introduced by our hoſt, and expreſſed his thanks to us in the moſt polite manner, and without further delay we all went on board.

We had ſcarce quitted Calais, when it began to blow with tremendous violence, and from a quarter that equally oppoſed our getting to Dover or regaining the harbour we had juſt quitted, which the ſeamen anxiouſly, though without ſucceſs, laboured to effect. Mr. Howard and our fellow traveller exerted themſelves to mitigate our apprehenſions; aſſuring us, that as the veſſel was in good condition, and had many able hands on board, our fears greatly magnified the danger. A new alarm however ſoon after occurred which rendered our ſituation ſeriouſly critical: ſome part of the apparatus of the

the pump was found defective; and a leak having been discovered, the water began to make way very rapidly. Upon this information, the countenances of our comforters betrayed a sudden though but a momentary anxiety that wholly bereaved us of that support which their apparent ease and indifference had hitherto in some measure afforded us. Fanny, almost distracted, threw herself into the arms of Mr. Howard, as if for protection, and I, whose dismay, though not less severe was less audible, sat silently offering up my prayers to heaven with a resolute composure, the mere effects of hopeless despair, every moment expecting to be swallowed up in one of the frightful waves which were rising like mountains on all sides.

Mr. Howard being occupied in vainly endeavouring to moderate Fanny's terrors, and our stranger companion gone to examine into the nature of our alarm, I was in a manner left to my own reflections: and at length throwing my arms about my poor Fanny, who reclined her head almost lifeless upon Mr. Howard's shoulder—We are but going to rejoin our dear father, my love, cried I, nor is there any thing so very frightful in the idea. The Almighty might have been infinitely less merciful in his dispensations. We shall expire together, and at the same instant: one miserable survivor will not be preserved to mourn in a foreign country her irreparable loss; where not a pitying friend might be found to console her under the severity of affliction.

Affected by these words, our fellow traveller, whose return I had not perceived, besought me in the most respectful manner to allow him the honour of assisting me; and throwing his arm round

round me, ſupported me as I ſat, as far as was in his power, from the diſagreeable effects of the inceſſant rolling of the veſſel. Stupified by fear, I attended only to my dear Fanny, who had turned and locked herſelf in my embraces, and whom I laboured by various arguments to inſpire with that fortitude and reſignation which religion can alone diſpenſe in a moment ſo replete with horror. No moment could indeed prove more dreadful. The oaths and execrations of one half of the ſeamen, whoſe profanity ſeemed too habitual to deſert them even on this awful occaſion; the utter deſpondency of the other, and the diſmay of all our attendants, produced on the whole a ſcene of terror and confuſion, on which I cannot reflect without horror inexpreſſible.

Mr. Howard and our fellow traveller were the only perſons on board who at this critical juncture preſerved their uſual compoſure. The danger, however extreme and immediate, could neither diſtract their attentions nor wholly abſorb their cares; while the former employed himſelf unceaſingly to ſupport the exhauſted ſpirits of my ſiſter, the latter ſeemed to conſider me as his peculiar charge; and his converſation, at once ſoothing, ſpirited, and inſinuating, inſenſibly fortified my courage, and ſtrengthened my mind.

Gratified by the generous exertions made to ſuſtain my drooping fortitude, I at length turned round to regard the perſon to whom I conſidered myſelf as ſo particularly indebted, and was not a little aſtoniſhed to perceive, in the deportment of this unknown young man, a ſtriking and peculiar elegance, and in his countenance an intereſting

reſting intelligence, which I was amazed I had not before more particularly diſtinguiſhed.

The ſerenity of his aſpect at that formidable inſtant ſtruck me ſo forcibly, that I involuntarily exclaimed—oh with what ſuperior reſolution muſt God Almighty have endowed *men*, if you, Sir, are really as unconcerned as you appear at this tremendous moment!

I believe this ſally made him ſmile. Madam, ſaid he, I have ever been of opinion that in natural courage the ladies are infinitely our ſuperiors. It muſt be owned, perhaps, that men are not quite ſo ingenious in apprehending or in foreſeeing evil at a diſtance; but when it actually arrives, we ſeldom ſupport its bitterneſs with more genuine greatneſs of mind than the gentler ſex often teſtify in the moſt arduous and painful circumſtances. The compoſure and reſolution, added he, which I have juſt been contemplating has but confirmed this idea, and augmented my admiration of female fortitude.

As he pronounced theſe words, the ſailors gave a loud huzza on having at length effected the re-adjuſtment of the pump. Fanny, unuſed to ſuch rude demonſtrations of joy, imagined all was over, and that we were inſtantly going to the bottom; but Mr. Howard and our companion ſoon relieved her fears, by congratulating us on the ſafety which this tranſaction indicated, and as the ſtorm now began to abate conſiderably, our apprehenſions were leſs diſtreſſing. Still however it blew from an unfavourable point, and the maſter told us he had no hopes of gaining Dover till next morning; but the ſecurity of which he aſſured us made us conſider that delay as of little moment; and with revived ſpirits my ſiſter and I entered into converſation

verſation with Mr. Howard and our agreeable new acquaintance, to whoſe compaſſionate ſupport I owed in a great meaſure the compoſure for which he ſo eagerly applauded me.

I now had leiſure to obſerve him, and found, that prepoſſeſſing as had been his figure on a curſory view, it loſt nothing of my admiration from being more minutely conſidered. He ſeemed about twenty four, and I think I never beheld a countenance that poſſeſſed ſo large a portion of that expreſſion, to which, from inability otherwiſe to define it, is uſually given the appellation of *je ne ſçai quoi*.

Mr. Howard was delighted with his converſation, which ſeemed the reſult of a mind cultivated and enlightened, joined to an extenſive knowledge of the world. The circumſtances of our ſituation entirely diſcarded the formalities of a recent introduction, and ſeemed to pave the way for intimacy. We converſed as old friends, who had been unexpectedly preſerved by the mercy of Providence: nor did it, I believe, once occur to any of the party, till we had actually landed on ſhore, that this agreeable ſtranger was but the acquaintance of a night, and that we were even ignorant of his name.

Mr. Howard invited him to breakfaſt with us at the inn, where we did not arrive till eleven in the morning; and he accepted it with evident marks of pleaſure. A ſlight refreſhment was then brought in: of which, exhauſted and fatigued as we were, my ſiſter and I were unable to partake, and we all ſoon after retired to reſt, which was, you may conjecture, extremely requiſite. A few hours however ſufficed to refreſh us; and awaking about ſix in the evening,

evening, we immediately aroſe, and on entering the parlour found the gentlemen impatiently expecting us to dinner.

After many obliging enquiries, and hoping that we had not ſuffered from our fears and fatigues—I have been acknowledging to Mr. Howard, ſaid our fellow traveller, both a failure in gallantry and a degree of ſelfiſhneſs which may in all probability ſubject me to the mortification of your cenſure; but it muſt be owned, notwithſtanding the danger you two ladies were expoſed to and the ſevere apprehenſions you underwent, for which I think none could feel more poignantly than I myſelf did, that it will never be in my power to reflect on that night without experiencing the moſt lively emotions of pleaſure at the recollection; ſince it has procured me the honour of an acquaintance which I ſhall ever regard as one of the moſt fortunate events of my life.

To this compliment, too flattering for a reply, we could only anſwer by an inclination of our heads. Whether we all prized our exiſtence the more for having been ſo lately on the point of loſing it I know not, but our recent danger certainly beſtowed an additional reliſh on our preſent ſecurity, and gave ſuch a lightneſs to our hearts, as put all ceremony and conſtraint at defiance. My mind had not, ever ſince our irreparable loſs, felt ſo unburthened either from painful recollections or anticipated evils as it then did, and in bleſſing heaven for our ſafety I did not fail to lift up my ſoul in thankfulneſs that I was enabled to enjoy it from a flow of ſpirits which have been long a ſtranger to my boſom.

Our

Our agreeable companion partook of our gaiety; and joined in the converſation with a polite vivacity which animated and ſupported it. Ah! thought I, more than once during the evening, were all the Engliſh as amiable and accompliſhed as this ſpecimen ſeems to indicate, little ſhould I regret that fate has condemned me to reſide among them.

You may believe, Sophia, we were all not a little deſirous of knowing the name of a perſon whoſe addreſs and appearance had prepoſſeſſed us ſo ſtrongly in his favour, and with whom we had been converſing for hours on a footing of intimacy. He had greatly the advantage of us in this particular, had his curioſity been equally excited; for hearing Mr. Howard, my ſiſter, and myſelf, mutually name each other, he was enabled to give us our proper appellations of diſtinction, while all we could diſcover in regard to him was, what occaſionally dropt from him in the courſe of converſation, and that went no further than to inform us that he had been ſeveral years abroad, which time he had ſpent in reſiding at the different courts of Europe, where he appeared intimately acquainted with ſeveral characters of eminence not wholly unknown to Mr. Howard.

When Fanny and I got up to retire for the night, he approached to take leave of us, ſaying that family affairs required him to haſten his departure; but the happineſs of your company, ſaid he, has made me ſteal a few hours from my journey: but may I be allowed to flatter myſelf that you will permit me the favour of enquiring after your healths in town, where I hope to be in a ſhort time? I confeſs the boldneſs of this requeſt may juſtly induce you to accuſe me of

of temerity: but after the good fortune fate has conferred in this introduction, I cannot prevail with myſelf to relinquiſh the unlooked for benefit that has been thrown in my way. May I then flatter myſelf you will favour me ſo far? We aſſured him we ſhould be extremely happy to ſee him; and referred him to Mr. Howard for the knowledge of our abode, which is unknown to ourſelves. We are ſtrangers and foreigners in England, ſaid I, and ſhall certainly be much pleaſed to meet again with our firſt Engliſh acquaintance. We then wiſhed him an agreeable journey, and left the room.

When we had retired, this unknown expreſſed in warm terms to Mr. Howard his wiſhes for improving this accidental acquaintance, made many polite offers of ſervice, and diſcovered his name at parting by preſenting him with a card, on which was written the following addreſs—the Honourable Charles Roatſley, St. James's Square. He then ſet off in a carriage and four at half paſt two in the morning.

Mr. Howard has perſuaded us to remain all this day at Dover, and perhaps to-morrow, in order to recruit our ſpirits after our fatigue, and I have acquieſced becauſe my ſiſter is rather indiſpoſed; but the day after we ſhall certainly purſue our journey. Adieu.

H. SEYMOUR.

LET-

LETTER V.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

LONDON, DEC. 2, —.

OH! my Sophia, how unfortunate have we been! Our friend, good Mr. Benſeley is no more! he expired only two days ago of the gout, which had attacked his ſtomach, and here are we in London, this immenſe overgrown city, without one ſingle human being, Mr. Howard excepted, who has the moſt diſtant intereſt in us, or probably knows of our exiſtence.

Oh! what a burthen muſt we prove to that worthy man's mind, and how little claim, except from his friendſhip to my father, have we to give him ſo much trouble!

This unfortunate and unforeſeen calamity has overwhelmed us with affliction. It has broken all our meaſures, and interrupted all our plans. We fell as in a deſert. This is indeed *ſolitude*, to be without friends and without protection, except what we receive from the kindneſs of compaſſion.

Mr. Howard this morning (for we got hither laſt night, but unwilling to diſturb Mr. Benſeley's ſober family at ſo late an hour, procured very good lodgings in a neighbouring ſtreet) went himſelf to inform our worthy guardian of the arrival of his gueſts. You may eaſily conclude how much ſhocked he was on being informed by the footman who attended at the door that Mr. Benſeley had expired on Monday laſt: he returned inſtantly in great perturbation

turbation to inform us of this diſmal intelligence.

This is an accident extremely unfortunate, ſaid he, as Mr. Benſeley was undoubtedly the propereſt perſon to mediate between you and your grand father; but I hope natural affection will plead for his ſon's offspring ſo powerfully as to induce him immediately to take you under his own protection, in which caſe no material inconvenience will accrue from the loſs.

Oh! in what unavoidable difficulties did your friendly kindneſs involve you, my dear Sir, cried I, when you undertook ſo troubleſome a charge as we muſt prove!

Talk not to me in this ſtyle, my dear Miſs Seymour, cried he, interrupting me—the trifling aſſiſtance I had it in my power to offer you towards regulating your affairs at B——, was without a compliment ſo greatly recompenſed by the opportunity with which I was favoured of manifeſting, however feebly, my friendſhip for your father, that it pains me to think you ſhould imagine any thanks due to an occurrence which employed agreeably a little idle time that muſt otherwiſe have lain heavy and languid on my hands: as to the honour you did me in allowing me to attend you hither, it was a favour as well as a gratification for which my thanks inſtead of yours are due.

I believe that had Mr. Benſeley's death taken place previous to your father's, he would have nominated me your guardian: as this event has followed, I owe it in duty to my deceaſed friend, as well as from my eſteem for you, to take on me the care of your affairs; and as the firſt proof of your obedience, I exact an eternal ſilence on the ſubject, either of apology or gratitude.

titude. Let us conſider then, continued he in the ſame breath, to prevent our again interrupting him again with apologies, what ſteps we ought next to purſue. I am of opinion that an application to Lord Belmont cannot too ſoon be made; and if I have your permiſſion, ſhall undertake to write to him this very day.

We inſtantly cloſed with the propoſal, and he directly left us to ſet about the taſk; in the ſucceſs of which he ſeems as anxious, and as deeply intereſted, as if we were his moſt intimate connections and our lives depended on the iſſue. The happineſs of our lives at leaſt certainly hang on the event. Oh! my Sophia, think of our critical ſituation, and feel for the agitation of my mind at this moment. A few hours will decide all—will determine whether we are outcaſts from our family, deſerted and friendleſs, or received with tender emotion to the boſom of a parent, to whom, though unknown, my heart glows with the warmeſt affection and moſt filial reſpect. My ſoul, melted by an eternal ſeparation from one yet more dearly beloved, diſſolves with the ſoft ideas which ruſh upon my mind. Imagination, never more buſy than in the moments of agitation, perpetually repreſents ſome future ſcene of affecting delight, and while I weep the bitter loſs of one father, I ſee myſelf every moment encircled in the arms of another—whom heaven yet preſerves.

DEC. 3.

Fanny, whoſe heart is always full of ſoothing hopes, ſtrives to recompenſe the diſappointment we have ſuffered in the death of Mr.

Benſeley, by anticipating happineſs under the protection of Lord Belmont; but the painful uncertainty of what may be his Lordſhip's determination, is, alas! rendered more acute by delay. Mr. Howard went out yeſterday immediately after dinner, intending himſelf to deliver the letter he had written.

The ſervant who opened the door, on being aſked if his Lordſhip was at home, returned for anſwer that he was not expected till ſpring.

Is then my Lord in the country? ſaid Mr. Howard.

No, Sir, he is ſtill at Nice.

Mr. Howard was much diſappointed at this information; and as he held the letter in his hand with a look of chagrin, the footman told him, that if he was anxious to have it ſent ſafe he might leave it with his Lordſhip's ſteward, who lodged at preſent in the houſe, and who would take care to diſpatch it with a proper direction. As he ſpoke theſe words, the ſteward himſelf paſſed the door; and hearing his name pronounced, civilly advanced to know if Mr. Howard had any commands for Lord Belmont in which he could aſſiſt him, and aſked him to walk into the parlour.

Mr. Howard ſeized this opportunity for making ſome further enquiries; and was informed, that my Lord being thought in a declining ſtate of health, had been ordered by his phyſicians abroad; that he had been abſent almoſt a twelvemonth, attended by his grandſon, the preſent Lord Linroſe, who was likewiſe adviſed to try a warmer climate for the recovery of a cough, which was apprehended to be conſumptive. The death of his father, the late Lord, the ſteward added, had induced the family

mily to expect the immediate return both of Lord Linroſe and his grand-father; but the laſt diſpatches had entirely contradicted this idea, intimating that Lord Belmont had received ſuch eſſential benefit from the ſalutary air of Nice, that he had determined to continue there till his diſorder was wholly removed; and that Lord Linroſe dared not venture as yet braving a chilly winter in England.

Mr. Howard then returned to us, not a little hurt at the intelligence he was conſtrained to communicate. Oh, Sophia, how unfortunate! Had we been made ſooner acquainted with theſe particulars, we might have remained in our peaceful retreat at B——, where, happy in the protection and friendſhip of Madame de Clarence, we muſt have enjoyed comfort and contentment; but poor Mr. Benſeley's death is an evil we dreaded not; and bequeathed to his care, we were left no choice as to our reſidence.

Nothing can prove more delicate, more embarraſſing, than our preſent ſituation. I am but ill verſed, I own, in the cuſtoms which in this part of the world propriety preſcribes; yet ſurely Mr. Howard, neither from age nor appearance, can be deemed a proper protector, under the aſſumed appellation of guardian, for two young girls unfriended and unknown, particularly when he is himſelf conſcious that he poſſeſſes not even that nominal title to remain conſtantly under the ſame roof with us. It muſt ſubject us to obſervation, and probably may even provoke cenſure; yet ſo tender is the point, that I ſhould bluſh but to hint it to him.

DEC. 4.

Mr. Howard, after appearing very thoughtful moſt part of yeſterday evening, made an apology for abſenting himſelf for an hour or two, and left us.

We had indeed been extreme bad company. Fanny was ſunk and diſappointed. What a reverſe from the gay chimeras that had taken poſſeſſion of her mind. Languid and diſpirited, ſhe had reclined, half aſleep, upon a chair, leaving me to ſupport a converſation with Mr. Howard which evidently intereſted neither party; but aſhamed of the burthen we are reduced to impoſe on that amiable man, and which (though from friendly anxiety alone) appeared to hang very heavily on his mind, I vainly exerted myſelf to appear in ſpirits in order to lighten his viſible uneaſineſs, and affected to be unconſcious that our ſituation was either ſo awkward or ſo uncomfortable as it in fact appeared to me.

The moment he was gone, however, my half ſuffocating emotions got vent; and ſuddenly giving way to the anguiſh that oppreſſed me, I threw my arms about my deareſt Fanny's neck, and burſt into a flood of tears, which flowed with profuſion, from a variety of painful feelings.

Accuſtomed to the tender attentions of paternal care, ſoftened by the careſſes and indulgence of paternal fondneſs, my heart felt—bitterly felt! the painful void of poſſeſſing none to whom I owed affection and duty—none from whom I could claim tenderneſs and regard.

Oh! my deareſt Fanny! cried I, were we this inſtant to expire, who would ſhed one tear over us? My Sophia indeed, my kind, my affectionate Sophia, ſtill remains to me; and poſ-

ſeſſed of ſuch a friend, I ought not to repine: but who, in all this populous and extended country, (Mr. Howard excepted) were we to lay down our heads and die before another day returned, would pay us even a tribute of paſſing regret. Every one elſe is bleſt with ſome tender relation who calls forth and returns the ſoothing ſenſations of intereſt and attachment, but we are unknown, unloved, and unconnected on the earth!

Having vented the firſt effuſions of my feelings, I grew more compoſed; and reproaching myſelf for this weak indulgence, which had ſeverely affected my poor Fanny, who, naturally ſanguine, was not diſpoſed for ſuch deep depreſſion had I not ſet her an example of dejection, I dried my eyes and endeavoured all in my power to ſoothe and conſole her; but the taſk was not ſo eaſy as I had imagined. Grief and fear are often infectious; and I had pointed out the melancholy independence of our ſituation in terms ſo alarming as had intimidated and alarmed her. In attempting to give her comfort however I profited by my own arguments, and began to perceive that we had not in fact that reaſon for deſpondency which the ſolitude of our ſituation had at firſt ſuggeſted. Letters would not be long in reaching Nice, and a ſhort ſuſpence would one way or other ſoon compoſe all our agitations.

Theſe reflections produced a tolerable degree of compoſure by the time Mr. Howard returned. I have been viſiting my brother's family, ſaid he, which I have not had an opportunity of doing till this evening, and have brought a meſſage from his lady, requeſting that you both would favour

favour her with your company to-morrow to dinner. She intends to have the pleaſure of waiting on you in the morning, and hopes to procure you ſome little amuſement by attending you to whatever appears curious to ſtrangers in this metropolis.

We gratefully accepted the propoſal. He afterwards told us that he had been paying another viſit to Lord Belmont's ſteward. He tells me, ſaid he, that Lady Linroſe is ſtill at her ſeat in Northamptonſhire, where ſhe has reſided conſtantly ſince her Lord's death, and I mean, ſhould you approve of it, by only making a few alterations, to addreſs the letter to her Ladyſhip which was intended for my Lord.

Mean time, continued he, my ſiſter in law will be delighted to have the favour of your company, not as occaſional viſitors only, but as inmates of her family. She entreated me with much earneſtneſs to make this propoſal to you; but I told her, although I felt a guardian's intereſt, I could not abſolutely claim a guardian's authority, and muſt leave her to prevail with my charming wards by her own interceſſion when ſhe is introduced to their acquaintance; I hope however you will find Mrs. Hindon's houſe ſo agreeable as may induce you to oblige her by making it your abode till you are otherwiſe ſettled to your ſatisfaction.

With how much delicacy was this propoſal made. The compliment of ſuch an offer from an utter ſtranger could not but have been ſuggeſted from Mr. Howard's having repreſented in ſtrong colours our helpleſs and unconnected ſituation. The idea hurts and mortifies me; yet

yet we cannot but feel gratified by Mr. Howard's endeavours to perſuade us to regard this civility as a favour conferred upon his ſiſter inſtead of being received from her hands.

While we remain in this uncertainty, in order to guard againſt curioſity, I have requeſted Mr. Howard to conceal our real ſituation and connections except from his brother's family, to whom he promiſes to enjoin ſecreſy.

Mr. Howard's letter to Lady Linroſe, briefly ſtating our ſituation and requeſting her mediation with Lord Belmont, was ſent off by this day's poſt. He tells her Ladyſhip that we are at preſent in London, where the accident of Mr. Benſeley's death leaves us (in our grandfather's abſence) entirely dependant on her Ladyſhip, whoſe countenance we venture to entreat, ſince we are unconſcious of having in any way forfeited our right to the protection of our family; and whoſe good offices our friendleſs ſtate leads us to ſolicit, as well from her benevolence and humanity as from the ties of conſanguinity which ſubſiſt between us. It is directed to Northamptonſhire, and we anxiouſly wait her Ladyſhip's reply.

Mrs. Hindon was ſo kind as to breakfaſt with us this morning, accompanied by her huſband. She is a little plump woman, between thirty and forty, whoſe countenance is by no means plain, but whoſe addreſs is far from poſſeſſing either poliſh or grace. What her manners wanted in elegance was however fully made up by kindneſs and attention. She overwhelmed both Fanny and me with expreſſions of civility and offers of friendſhip, and told us that ſhe inſiſted on our becoming her gueſts, and making her

her houſe our own as long as we ſhould find it agreeable. She regretted extremely, ſhe ſaid, that a country couſin, who however would be otherwiſe diſpoſed of in a few days, at preſent occupied the apartment, which afterwards would be heartily and entirely at our ſervice: but as ſoon as ſhe could get her trumpery removed, and things were put in proper order, ſhe hoped we would favour her ſo far as to take immediate poſſeſſion of it.

This hoſpitality, though rather rudely expreſſed, was ſo extremely benevolent, and ſo happily timed for our difficulties, that I knew not how to expreſs in terms ſufficiently fervent the gratitude it inſpired.

Mrs. Hindon then carried us an airing in her coach, through ſeveral of the principal ſtreets of the city, and appeared ſo kindly ſolicitous for our entertainment, that during our ride ſhe was continually planning different parties of pleaſure, or deſcribing different places of amuſement, to which ſhe promiſed to accompany us; and ſhe regretted much that the morning was too far advanced to admit of our ſeeing any of the ſights and curioſities which ſhe ſaid abounded in every quarter of the town.

On returning to ſet us down at our lodgings, ſhe invited us to dine at her houſe, and inſiſted on ſending her carriage for us before her hour of dining.

Finding it near three o'clock, we ſet about dreſſing with the utmoſt expedition; but ſo abſurdly late are the hours in this part of the world, that though it is now paſt four in the afternoon, the coach has not yet made its appearance, and Mr. Howard tells me people here don't

don't think of ſitting down to dinner till the evening is far advanced.

DEC. 5.

Our entertainment yeſterday was ſplendid, and the furniture of Mr. Hindon's houſe ſuperb and expenſive beyond what I ſhould have expected in the abode of a man who owes his riches in a great meaſure to his own induſtry. Every thing in the family beſpoke opulence. The appearance of the lady of the manſion did not however, I muſt acknowledge, accord with the elegance that ſurrounded her; but ſhe was ſo extremely kind and obliging, that it is ungrateful to lay an ungenerous ſtreſs on a fault which proceeds not from the heart, and which for that reaſon muſt be unſeen by her friends though ſtriking to the eyes of a ſtranger.

The company conſiſted of a Sir Jonathan Farnford, his lady, and daughter, a young lady of ſixteen, juſt come from a boarding ſchool, Captain Wilmot, nephew to Mrs. Hindon, and a modeſt looking girl, whoſe ſurname I heard not, as Mr. and Mrs. Hindon always ſpoke to her by the familiar appellation of Jenny, and who I conjectured was the country couſin before mentioned. In this idea I was confirmed from obſerving the unfeeling neglect with which ſhe was treated, not only by the lady of the houſe, but by all her gueſts (our party excepted) who ſeemed to have taken a hint from that lady's behaviour to regard the poor girl as an inferior.

I could not help extremely pitying her ſitua-

tion, which was to the laſt degree mortifying, particularly as her diffidence and timidity appeared rather to aſk for encouragement than to provoke rebuke. She evidently felt uncomfortable and aſhamed; and ſat ſilently negligent of what was paſſing, as if perfectly unconcerned in the ſcene, and without once attempting to join in the converſation.

The painful dependence of this young woman ſtruck me the more forcibly as it was contraſted with that flow of civility, warm and unbounded, which Mrs. Hindon abundantly laviſhed upon us, though utter ſtrangers, and which, while it gained my innocent Fanny's heart, appeared to me ſo greatly beyond what an acquaintance of a few hours could either excite or authorize in a mind poſſeſſed of delicacy and refinement, that though charmed with it for the firſt half hour, and delighted with the flattering idea of having ſo early inſpired a predilection ſo fortunate in our preſent circumſtances, I began to conſider, before the evening was over, that kindneſs beſtowed ſo fervently, ere time had been given not only for inveſtigation but even for common knowledge, muſt be too indiſcriminate either to prove gratifying or laſting, and ſeemed rather the effuſions of the tongue than the overflowings of a heart warm and ſincere. I confeſs indeed, that the viſit of yeſterday to Mrs. Hindon has not encreaſed my deſire of reſiding in her houſe; yet as it is the only eligible ſcheme that preſents itſelf at preſent, and ſhe is eager that we ſhould accept of her repeated invitations, we have reſolved for a ſhort time to comply.

I was extremely aſtoniſhed, during this viſit, to obſerve the remarkable difference between

our

our manners (for ſtill muſt I regard France as my own country) and thoſe of the Engliſh. I own I have been very little converſant in any ſociety; yet when I have been at the chateau de Clarence, and while I was permitted at your aunt's earneſt entreaties to ſpend that happy three weeks (never to be forgotten) in all the innocent gaieties of M—— with my beloved Sophy, I remember the gentlemen who occaſionally viſited at your houſe were all uniformly attentive and polite in the higheſt degree, and were even ſo well bred as to appear gratified with our preſence and pleaſed with our converſation, whatever their private ſentiments might be; but here, my dear, the behaviour of the men was not only indifferent and uncomplaiſant, but often rude and uncivil.

Captain, though very gayly dreſſed, and in a ſtyle which betrayed no great diſlike to the idea of attracting the notice of the other ſex, yet endeavoured by various methods to diſcover his perfect diſregard of the ladies preſent, whom he did not ſeem to think deſerving even of the common attentions uſually paid them.

Mrs. Hindon, on our entering, introduced him to us; which having produced a haſty bow, he afterwards reclined with his back to the wall in a careleſs attitude, and then ſtrolled about the room, occaſionally joining the other gentlemen, who were chatting by themſelves in a corner.

Theſe airs had the effect (for which I make no doubt they were intended) of augmenting his importance in the eyes of Miſs Farnford, who ſtrove to attract his attention, and at laſt ſucceeded ſo far as to engage him in a *tête à tête* converſation, if ſuch it could be called, partly

partly compoſed of tittering and whiſpering, of which Fanny and I were evidently the objects. Lady Farnford and Mrs. Hindon however atoned for their incivility, by beſtowing on us their whole attention. The former, with the moſt inſatiable curioſity, endeavoured to penetrate into every circumſtance relating to our ſituation abroad, with an avidity which could not have been excited without ſome previous information.

I cautioned Mr. Howard on the ſubject of ſecreſy, and beſought him to requeſt his brother and Mrs. Hindon not to communicate our affairs out of their own family; but I fear it has not been at all obſerved, for it was not difficult to perceive that we were regarded by the whole company with an eye of eager ſcrutiny, which denoted that we had been, according to a phraſe of Mrs. Hindon's, *on the carpet* before we entered.

At table, the converſation was general: that is to ſay, it conſiſted of thoſe common-place topics which neither greatly amuſe nor deeply intereſt, but which in a mixed company are taken up with ſeeming eagerneſs merely *pour paſſer le tems*.

Mr. Hindon appears to be a good ſort of bluff Engliſh character, who can allow neither of merit or talents out of their own country, nor conceive any ſort of enjoyment out of this city, which he ſays he never quits even in ſummer, though he has a very fine villa within ſix miles of town. He is a banker, and poſſeſſed of a large fortune, partly the fruits of his own induſtry, and partly brought him by his wife; from whom, being an heireſs, according to an eſtabliſhed

eſtabliſhed form here, he alſo receives his name.

He ſeems to enjoy good cheer with an extraordinary reliſh: dinner ſerving equally for the purpoſes of converſation and refreſhment. The former, it indeed furniſhed abundantly; only varied by a diſſertation on the different diſhes. I remarked that Sir Jonathan, as well as Mr. Hindon, appeared to value themſelves extremely on thoſe qualities which more properly belonged to their cooks.

When the repaſt, which was ſumptuous, was removed to make way for the deſſert, the younger part of the family, conſiſting of two girls under ten years old and a boy about ſix, made their appearance, and compleatly took place of the diſcourſe on cookery. The delighted parents inſtantly ſhifting the topic to that of their children, related with eager ſatisfaction their various improvements, accompliſhments, and diſpoſitions, not forgetting the infantine bon bots of little Billy, whom ſleep deprived us of the pleaſure of beholding.

I am myſelf ſo extremely fond of children, that this converſation, had I been the only perſon preſent, might have entertained and even intereſted me; but I could not help painfully feeling for its impropriety, which ſo evidently fatigued inſtead of amuſed the company on this occaſion, that I pitied the blindneſs while I could not but admire the warmth of Mrs. Hindon's maternal tenderneſs. Sir Jonathan indeed took little pains to conceal that he was heartily tired of the ſubject; but neither his repeated yawnings, nor conſtant attempts to change it, could induce the gratified parents to wander from a point

point which they concluded gave almoſt equal pleaſure to their gueſts and themſelves.

When the ladies retired to tea and coffee, Fanny and I were again ſubjected to the inquiſitive interrogatories of Lady Farnford; which, as our ſituation is at preſent but in part revealed, extremely embarraſſed me. That we had been educated abroad, and never had viſited England before, I wiſhed not to conceal; but our reaſons for leaving a ſpot which had been ſo long our home, and the ſolitude in which we had been reared, it was unneceſſary to divulge, and for many reaſons I choſe not to acknowledge, eſpecially to a perſon whom I had not been introduced to above a couple of hours before; yet Lady Farnford contrived to penetrate into every circumſtance with an eagerneſs which convinced me all was not perfectly new to her.

You received your education in a convent, I believe, ladies? ſaid ſhe.

Yes, Madam.

Lord, cried the daughter, were you not afraid they would have made nuns of you?

We had no great reaſon to be alarmed as to that point, ſaid I, for my father took infinite care to fortify us againſt all their attacks.

I fancy, reſumed the mother, *home* would not be much more lively than the monaſtery, for I believe you lived *retiredly* enough. You ſaw very little company I ſhould oppoſe.

Finding I only anſwered by a ſimple affirmative, without growing in the leaſt communicative, ſhe turned to Fanny—It muſt have been rather dull, I ſhould imagine, to live in a manner ſo ſolitary, ſo out of the world, with no ſociety

ciety but merely that of the old gentlem n your father ?

Our governeſs, a moſt amiable and reſpectable woman, ſaid Fanny, died only four years ago; and ſhe was our conſtant companion while ſhe lived.

But you muſt have been very young when you loſt her ?

Yes, Madam, my ſiſter was not then fourteen, and I was ſcarcely twelve.

You got ſome one, I ſhould imagine, to ſupply her place ?

None, Madam. My Siſter was ſoon after ſent to the convent for two years, and I was left ſolely under my father's care till her return: for he took great pains himſelf in our improvement, and could not conſent to deprive himſelf of both at one time.

It muſt have appeared very diſmal, ſaid Lady Farnford. To be always in the country and to ſee nobody, muſt be gloomy indeed at your time of life, for you had no ſociety I believe.

Oh ! Madam, we never ſaw a human creature; my father had no viſitors, and never went a viſiting himſelf.

Knowing that this was a ſubject on which Fanny would innocently expatiate, without conſidering its imprudence, I mentioned my beloved Sophia, and her aunt, who, I ſaid, ſometimes were ſo kind as to enliven our ſolitude with their viſits, and in whoſe company my father had once been prevailed on to allow me to ſpend ſome weeks at the town of M——. I alſo ſpoke of Madame de Clarence, and did not forget Mr. Howard, who was indeed, tho' I did not own it, the only male viſitor my father

ther has had in my memory, Mr. Benſeley excepted, whom I ſcarce recollect.

You, my Sophia, was a new ſource of inveſtigation and curioſity. Who was this Miſs Beaumont? where had I got acquainted with her? When anſwered that ſhe had been my favorite friend at the convent, that we had received our education together, and that ſhe was only daughter and heireſs to Sir Edward Beaumont, whoſe name and public employment could not be unknown to her, I aſſure you my importance ſeemed not a little encreaſed by the information.

The appearance of the gentlemen, I was in hopes, would have relieved me from this embarraſſing converſation: but Lady Farnford was determined it ſhould not drop ſo ſoon.

My dear, cried ſhe to her huſband, theſe ladies have been entertaining us mightily. They have been telling us all about their manner of living abroad; and that the old gentleman their father was of a moſt ſingular and extraordinary humour. He hardly ever allowed of the young ladies leaving home, and never permitted a man to enter his doors.

This ſpeech, which implied that we had been complaining of this laſt circumſtance as a peculiar hardſhip, put me extremely out of countenance, and inſtantly drew the eyes of the gentlemen towards us: but Mr. Howard relieved my awkwardneſs by ſaying that Mr. Seymour was indeed uncommonly fond of retirement, yet at the ſame time ſo warmly attached and indulgent to his children, that he would moſt willingly have allowed them what ſociety they choſe, had not their duty and affection induced them

them with pleaſure to conform to a way of life which they knew was agreeable to his taſte.

What could his intention be, Miſs, ſaid Sir Jonathan, addreſſing himſelf to me, in burying you alive in that manner? Certainly he never could expect to get you off his hands at that rate; at leaſt his method was rather extraordinary. For my part I think it is a piece of injuſtice to ſhut up girls like birds in a cage. Let them ſee and be ſeen, and take their chance in the matrimonial lottery like others: one muſt not expect now-a-days that our daughters will be courted by proxy on the report of their beauty. There's Betſey now—I hope to live to ſee her happily ſettled; but I ſhould not think I performed my duty to the girl, if I ſhut her up always at home, where ſhe would have no opportunity of making a good creditable ſettlement.

It was not eaſy to find an anſwer to this ſpeech, which was entirely addreſſed to me, and I did not attempt it. I felt however for his daughter, who I concluded muſt be equally ſhocked with its rude indelicacy; you may then gueſs my aſtoniſhment, when I heard her ſay, inwardly ſpeaking, but without the leaſt appearance of baſhfulneſs—Indeed I ſhould not think it at all fair.

The whole company ſtaid ſupper; and as whiſt was the game, of which Fanny and I are entirely ignorant and we declined any other, Sir Jonathan and Lady Farnford and Mr. and Mrs. Hindon made a party; Miſs Farnford, the Captain and Fanny, having ſeated themſelves on a ſopha, ſoon after entered into chat together, in which Mr. Howard joined. As for me, I was placed by the card players; and though

though more in a contemplative than talkative humour, (for indeed I was anxiouſly revolving in my mind the ſucceſs of the letter to Lady Linroſe,) yet ſeeing Miſs Jenny take up her work, and ſit down at the farther end of the room as if unwilling to intrude on the converſation, I took that opportunity of teſtifying that I did not regard her in the mortifying point of view which ſeemed ſo unfeelingly to influence the reſt of the company; and ſhifting my ſeat in order to join her, endeavoured to conquer the diſtance and reſerve with which ſhe kept herſelf unconnected with thoſe from whom ſhe only expected indelicacy and ill breeding.

She appeared much gratified with my attention, and received it with a degree of modeſty which evinced ſhe had not always been accuſtomed even to common politeneſs. We converſed together till ſupper was announced; and I found ſomething, both in her ſentiments and manner of expreſſing them, ſuperior to what I perceived in any of the reſt of the party.

I am afraid my Sophia will conclude I am growing cenſorious upon entering the world; but to an eye unaccuſtomed to a mixture of characters, and where all the errors and abſurdities of ſociety are entirely new, a thouſand faults and imperfections muſt appear, which habit conceals and acquaintance renders too familiar for obſervation.

To this I make no doubt it is in a great meaſure owing, that I find myſelf ſo early diſguſted by Mrs. Hindon's manners, for I own I am infinitely diſappointed; probably the more poignantly from the ſanguine diſpoſition with which I firſt met her. We were ſtrangers and unknown to her; and her benevolence in offering

us

us an aſylum beſpoke ſuch humanity and goodneſs of heart, that I inſtantly in my own mind adopted her for a friend, and received her firſt expreſſions of kindneſs with that gratitude and enthuſiaſm, which her civility undoubtedly ſtill merits, but which it is now no longer in my power ſo warmly to beſtow. Firſt ſight impreſſions I confeſs are extremely fallacious; yet I am much miſtaken if Mrs. Hindon poſſeſſes either that delicacy or good ſenſe, which, if they inhabit the mind ſeldom fail to throw ſome luſtre over the manners, however unpoliſhed by ſociety or a knowledge of the polite world.

I was particularly ſhocked by her behaviour to this poor girl. Nothing certainly diſcovers littleneſs of mind ſo evidently as inſolence to inferiors, or to thoſe whom calamities have rendered dependent on us. As we ſat together, I expreſſed my apprehenſions that our intended viſit was the occaſion of hurrying her away from Mrs. Hindon's ſooner than was her original intention; but before ſhe could reply, Mrs. Hindon overhearing me, anſwered—Oh never think of that, Miſs Seymour. I dare ſay Jenny herſelf would be very unwilling to ſtand in the way of my convenience. We can eaſily procure her an apartment at Mrs. Bret's the mantua maker's, for ſome weeks, and as we are at the expence of her lodgings, it is all one to her: beſides it is juſt in the corner of the ſtreet, and ſhe will eat here; ſo that I give you my word the honour of your company will not occaſion the ſlighteſt inconvenience. I only wiſh to have a day or two given me afterwards, that things may be made proper for your reception, and then I ſhall be quite affronted if you refuſe to favour me ſo far.

The

The extreme groſſneſs of this ſpeech, which ſo unfeelingly diſcovered Miſs Jenny's dependance, made her hang down her head in confuſion; and I felt her mortification ſo ſeverely, that I inſiſted on remaining in our preſent lodgings in preference to occaſioning her removal.

Mrs. Hindon however ſoon contrived to carry her point by rendering me quite incapable of arguing on the ſubject. You don't conſider, my dear Miſs Seymour, cried ſhe, how ſcandal flies in this town. What will not people ſay to ſee two fine young girls of your figure reſiding in lodgings, without the protection either of a father, a huſband, or a brother? I make no doubt but that Mr. Howard here would be exceedingly happy to act in the capacity of one of theſe relations; but till he proves his title, added ſhe, (laughing immoderately at the confuſion into which both her brother-in-law and we were thrown by this hint) you'll be charitably taken for a connection of a different kind.

Mr. Howard even bluſhed at her indelicacy; but ſaid, with an air of mingled dignity and gravity, that he ſhould be happy in performing any ſervices to us which might manifeſt his friendſhip for my father, and the ſenſe he ſhould ever poſſeſs of the obligations he owed him.

There I don't doubt you, returned Mrs. Hindon, ſmiling with a ſly look, and I hope the young ladies may rely on your good offices upon *their own account* as well as their father's.

I flatter myſelf they do, ſaid he, with a mild reſerve, though much embarraſſed by his facetious ſiſter in law's ill judged raillery.

Before we departed, Lady Farnford and her daughter came up, and expreſſed in warm terms their good fortune in having been introduced

to

to our acquaintance, hoped it would prove the forerunner of a cordial intimacy, and aſſured us they ſhould not fail to wait on us as ſoon as it was in their power.

Mrs. Hindon, who is indeed extremely kind, though I could wiſh it were attended with a little more ſoftneſs, called again this morning, and was hardly ſeated when Lady Farnford and her daughter were announced.

The latter on entering haſtily bruſhed by her mother, and ſhaking both Fanny and I by the hand with the familiarity and freedom due to old acquaintances, exclaimed—I am quite happy to ſee you both. I aſſure you mama has done nothing but praiſe you ſo as you can't think ſince laſt night, and we ordered the coach as ſoon as we had done breakfaſt, in order to wait on you, to requeſt that you would favour us with your company to the play, if you are not engaged on Wedneſday next. Mrs. Siddons is to appear in Belvidera. All the world will be there; and as we have engaged places, I hope you will certainly accompany us.

Lady Farnford joining in the requeſt, we conſented, although I do not much wiſh to appear in public, till we know on what footing we are to be introduced.

To-day we have ſpent at home, and entirely by ourſelves, which the two ladies regretted as a calamity their politeneſs would undoubtedly have prevented, had not previous engagements put it out of their power. Mr. Howard has been from home too moſt part of the day, employed I believe about our affairs with Mr. Benſeley's executors.

Mr.

EIGHT IN THE EVENING.

Mr. Howard is come in. With his accuſtomed kindneſs, he has been making enquiries I find reſpecting the ſituations and diſpoſitions of our neareſt relations, with the view of being enabled to judge from which of them we are likely to receive the moſt cordial reception. But though he does not wiſh to raiſe a prejudice in our minds againſt my uncle's family, he has been conſtrained to acknowledge, that with the exception of his ſecond ſon, (who is high in the world's eſtimation) they are not generally beloved.

Though of acknowledged probity and honor, a vain paſſion for ſtate and parade obſcures their good qualities, and renders their ſociety ſo ſhackled with oſtentatious ceremonials, that it is very little either courted or deſired. Lady Linroſe in particular exacts an homage on account of her rank, which is beheld with ridicule and granted with reluctance, of courſe out of a very general acquaintance ſhe enjoys the bleſſings of but few friends.

My uncle and her Ladyſhip, it ſeems, had lived ſeparate for ſome years previous to his death. He was a man of a very violent, untractable diſpoſition, and his lady poſſeſſed not that mild compliance of temper that could ſubmit to the headſtrong humour of her huſband. Lord Belmont, it is ſaid, approved of and even adviſed the ſeparation, and has preſerved for her Ladyſhip a reſpect and regard which leads the world to exculpate her from the ſhare of blame that uſually in ſimilar inſtances involves in ſome meaſure both parties.

Lady Ann Vere, my father's only ſiſter, Mr. Howard is told died about a twelvemonth ago.

She

She had buried her huſband ſome years before, and has left no family. Her loſs is particularly unfortunate at this juncture, as ſhe is ſaid to have been of a very amiable character, was extremely attached to my father, and partially beloved by Lord Belmont.

LETTER VI.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

DECEMBER 8.

HAVING diſpatched my laſt packet, Fanny and I were preparing to leave the parlour the other night, it being late, and Mr. Howard having already retired to bed, when the door was ſuddenly opened and two young men, ſeemingly intoxicated and diſordered, haſtily entered the room, as if quite at home. Upon ſeeing it occupied, they aſked pardon for their intruſion. They did not however attempt to repair it, by leaving the apartment, but ſtood ſome minutes endeavouring to excuſe themſelves on the ſcore of having miſtaken it for another, which it ſeems one of them at preſent inhabits in this houſe.

The wildneſs of their looks, and the elaborate length of their apology, led me inſtantly to ſuſpect that the miſtake was not unintentional, eſpecially as the part of the houſe which we have taken is perfectly diſtinct from that engaged by other lodgers. I recollected beſides that I had more than once remarked, ſince our abode here, that as we paſſed on the ſtairs a

face

face from the door of one of the rooms uſed to peep out as anxious to get a ſight of us, and concluded, from the behaviour of theſe gentlemen, that knowing there were two young women under the ſame roof with them, they had been ſeized with curioſity to ſee us, and in a ſtate of intoxication had ventured to introduce themſelves in this rude and abrupt manner.

Frightened by the bold way in which they ſtared at us, I curtſeyed with a very grave air, and told them the miſtake was of no conſequence, expecting them to depart. This however they had no intention of doing ſo immediately.

Since Fortune has proved ſo kind, ſaid one of them, who appeared the moſt intoxicated, ſince Fortune has ſo wonderfully favoured us with the knowledge that two ſuch angels exiſt, let us not fail to profit from the bleſt occaſion. Permit me the honour, ladies, of introducing this gentleman to the happineſs of your acquaintance, (pulling his friend by the arm, who, half aſhamed of his ſituation, had ſhrunk behind)—Tom Bradſhaw, Ma'am, (bowing), he is modeſt you may perceive, but as worthy a fellow as lives.

My embarraſſment and aſtoniſhment at this effrontery in an utter ſtranger may eaſily be conjectured. I knew not what reply to make to a ſpeech and behaviour ſo unaccountably forward and preſuming, but ſtood with a ſurpriſe and gravity in my countenance ſufficient I hoped to have confounded them, had they been capable of confuſion after ſuch a frolic.

Come, Tom, continued he, do me the ſame favour with the ladies: introduce me to theſe divinities,

divinities, who have kindly condeſcended to inhabit this our terreſtrial abode.

His companion however, whoſe faculties were either leſs impaired, or who did not naturally poſſeſs that degree of happy aſſurance with which the other ſeemed bleſt, becoming now thoroughly ſenſible of the error he had committed, and heartily aſhamed of his friend's behaviour, exclaimed—This is too much, Jack; let us be gone. Ladies, I am perfectly aſhamed—I bluſh—to have—to have intruded ſo rudely; and ſtammering out a very awkward apology, endeavoured to diſengage himſelf from his friend, who held him by the arm, ſwearing that he would not ſuffer him to leave the ladies ſo abruptly.

Terrified at the buſtle they began to create, I haſtily exclaimed, for heaven's ſake gentlemen leave us. Conſider we have not the pleaſure of knowing you. I then looked around in vain for the bell, but perceived there was none in the room, and I was too much intimidated to dare acknowledge my fears, by making an attempt to eſcape, which would probably have proved fruitleſs, as they had ſhut the door and ſtood themſelves almoſt before it.

Fanny, though in general rather timid, could not witneſs this ſcene without feeling more entertained than frightened. The extreme abſurdity of the two gentlemen's conduct, and the awkwardneſs of my aſtoniſhment, ſtruck her ſo forcibly, that in ſpite of her apprehenſions ſhe could not reſiſt giving way to a violent and childiſh fit of laughing; the bad conſequences of which ſoon appeared ſo evident, as to put a ſpeedy period to mirth ſo mal apropos.

Nay if you are for a frolic, ladies, cried the gentleman who had hitherto preſerved the moſt

decorum, ſuddenly turning round and joining heartily in the laugh, I'm your man.

Oh! cried the other, I knew they were dear kind little devils, and advancing to Fanny, was going to throw his arms around her, when a ſudden emotion of uncontroulable terror made us both utter at one inſtant a loud ſcream and fly to the door, which the gentlemen were too much intimidated to prevent our opening; and the landlady and Thereſe both appearing, they retired in haſte to their own apartment, while Fanny and I breathleſs with fear, did not for an hour recover our uſual compoſure.

Mrs. Brumpton, our landlady, who is a decent, ſenſible looking woman, then informed us that only one of the gentlemen lodged in her houſe, and the other, who by our account of his audacity ſhe aſſured us could not be Captain Bradſhaw, was one of his friends who often viſited him.

Her lodger, ſhe ſaid, was a gentleman of the beſt character, ſweet tempered, and extremely generous and had never been guilty of ſuch a riot in her houſe ſince he had lived with her; ſhe therefore imagined his preſent freedom muſt have entirely proceeded from inebriety, as indeed the other gentleman his friend was but too much given to that fault, and might have led him into it, and ſhe was certain Captain Bradſhaw would be quite diſtreſſed when he reflected on his miſbehaviour to two *ſuch ladies*.

She afterwards added, that having got a glimpſe of us one day on the ſtairs, he had been ſo much ſtruck, as ſhe called it, that he had often entreated her to contrive ſome means of ſeeing us for a longer time, but that ſhe had told him that was a favour he muſt [illegible] to chance [illegible] alone,

alone, as ſhe could not preſume to introduce him.

I told Mrs. Brumpton that intoxication, (a bad apology for any tranſgreſſion,) afforded no ſort of juſtification for rudeneſs like his, and that I ſhould moſt undoubtedly take effectual means to prevent a repetition of the ſame offence, by applying next day to Mr. Howard, who would talk to the young men on the ſubject without delay.

This was leſs my intention at the time than meant as a threat to be repeated from Mrs. Brumpton's lips to her lodger; though I had reſolved, in the heat of my reſentment, not conſidering the conſequences, to inform Mr. Howard of our affront and to requeſt his interference: but a moment's reflection had changed this reſolution; and the good woman repreſented ſo ſtrongly the riſque attending engaging two gentlemen in a quarrel, that I determined never to mention it to him unleſs I had reaſon to dread the continuance of a ſimilar conduct.

Next morning our landlady brought us an apology couched in the moſt reſpectful terms, from the Captain, entreating our forgiveneſs for our laſt night's alarm. As I was ſomewhat afraid of his encroachments after ſuch audacious behaviour, we took no further notice of his meſſage than to tell Mrs. Brumpton that while her lodger made no attempts to force himſelf on our acquaintance we ſhould think of the paſt no more.

All yeſterday and the day before Mrs. Hindon was confined with a bad cold, yet ſhe was ſo kind as to requeſt our company; but we de-

clined it, from the idea that politeneſs alone could have induced her when ill to ſolicit it.

Adieu, my love. H. SEYMOUR.

LETTER VI.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

DEC. 12.

WE removed to Mrs. Hindon's yeſterday, who received us with a profuſion of civilities. They had company all the day; but my ſpirits were weak, and I ſupported no part in the converſation. Mrs. Hindon, however, would not allow me to indulge my contemplative humour in peace, but enquired repeatedly what made me look ſo grave, and if I found myſelf indiſpoſed, till I was obliged to plead a head ach in excuſe for being ſo dull a companion. This happened really to be the caſe; and no ſooner was ſhe informed of it, than in ſpite of all my reſiſtance ſhe fairly forced me to go to reſt at a very early hour, long before any of her gueſts thought of taking leave. To this piece of kindneſs, tho' rather officious (for poor Mrs. Hindon's civilities are unfortunately ſometimes rather obtruſive) I was not ſorry to conſent; and retiring to bed, though not to ſleep, I paſſed the hours more at eaſe than I could have done in the midſt of a large circle where I was conſtrained to aſſume an appearance of gaiety foreign to my feelings. Lady Farnford was of the party laſt night; and to-morrow evening we propoſe accompanying her Ladyſhip to Drury-lane Theatre.

tre. She has a weekly box, to which we have received a general invitation whenever we incline to go.

Fanny, who as yet has not been preſent at an entertainment of this kind, is half wild with eagerneſs and expectation; and for myſelf, never having ſeen a dramatic performance ſince that gay and happy period when I accompanied my deareſt Sophia and her worthy aunt to ſeveral of the different diverſions at M——, the idea of my beloved friend is ſo intimately connected with the thoughts of an amuſement of this kind, that I ſigh at the melancholy reflection how diſtant we are at preſent, and recollect with redoubled anguiſh how delightful were the ſenſations of that pleaſing æra of my life to thoſe which have ſucceeded.

DEC. 14.

Well, my dear Sophia, we were both much delighted at the play; although there was ſomewhat very gloomy in a reflection which could not but occur on firſt entering, that in ſo large an audience, where half the world ſeemed met together, not one friendly countenance was to be found on which we had ever looked before, Lady Farnford and her daughter excepted (for Mr. Howard as well as Mrs. Hindon, were engaged to a lady's aſſembly, and Mr. Hindon ſeldom goes to places of public amuſement.) There is ſomething extremely diſmal in the thoughts of being an unconnected and ſolitary being, about whom no one is either ſolicitous or intereſted; nor does the idea ever ſtrike more poignantly than when you behold all around you in the

the full enjoyment of the bleſſings of friendſhip and ſociety. Miſs Farnford, in particular, appeared to poſſeſs, if not friends, ſuch variety of intimate acquaintances, that I could not avoid envying her in my heart the many kind ſalutations ſhe gave and returned from different parts of the houſe. This was however but a paſſing idea; for moſt fortunately in the midſt of the muſing to which it gave birth, and which in ſpite of the novelty of the ſurrounding ſcene almoſt wholly engroſſed me, I was ſuddenly rouſed from my melancholy contemplations by the ſight of Mr. Roatſley, who had entered the next box, but inſtantly on perceiving us removed to ours, and paid us his compliments with his uſual grace and politeneſs.

The train of recollections that had preceded his entrance made me view him with redoubled pleaſure. Luckily there was a place vacant between Fanny and me, of which he took immediate poſſeſſion; nor did he think of quitting it till the inimitable comedy of the Journey to London was concluded, for from ſome particular circumſtances the play had been changed. I was almoſt equally delighted with the repreſentation itſelf, and with the admirable and amuſing obſervations it drew from Mr. Roatſley, who was if poſſible ſtill more agreeable than when we paſſed the day with him at Dover. There is indeed a certain mixture of ſweetneſs and vivacity blended both in his countenance and manners, that renders his converſation uncommonly pleaſing. I was much charmed to perceive that the denouement of the piece, which, though defective I think in point of delicacy, is exceedingly affecting, brought a tear of feeling into his eye: there is indeed ſomething ſo amiable

ble in any unaffected ſymptoms of ſoftneſs and ſenſibility in a manly countenance, and it forms a contraſt ſo attractive from that roughneſs and auſterity which is in general ſeated upon their faces, that in my opinion it is the moſt inſinuating of all prepoſſeſſions; and as it gives you in a manner an inſight into the mind, renders the figure itſelf infinitely more intereſting. I ſuppoſe it was owing to this obſervation that Mr. Roatſley never ſtruck me with being ſo incomparably handſome as he did this evening.

Had I even enjoyed leſs pleaſure at the repreſentation of a piece which I have ſo often read with repeated ſatisfaction, I ſhould have been ſufficiently amuſed and delighted from obſerving the effect it produced on my dear Fanny, who was charmed beyond meaſure by an exhibition ſo entirely new, and of which my deſcription could have given her but a faint notion. Roatſley ſeemed both pleaſed and entertained with the innocent *naiveté* of her expreſſions of wonder at all ſhe ſaw, and with great goodneſs of heart enjoyed the entertainment ſhe drew from every object.

When the play was finiſhed, he left us for a few moments to pay his reſpects to a lady in another box; and ſo comfortable was the idea of poſſeſſing at leaſt one acquaintance amidſt ſo many faces totally new, for we were placed at a diſtance from either Lady Farnford or her daughter, that I could not avoid being apprehenſive leſt he ſhould not again return; but in a ſhort time he made his appearance, and reſumed his place, where he continued till we left the houſe.

This

DEC. 21.

This day produced an event which has charmed both Fanny and me beyond meaſure. We have unexpectedly met with an old friend, (for ſuch in this part of the world we ſhould deem almoſt any perſon whom we had known in our own country); and as ſuch we cordially welcomed our lively acquaintance, Mrs. Weldon, who arrived in town only the evening before laſt.

Fortunately ſhe had taken lodgings in the next ſtreet; and perceiving us in Mrs. Hindon's carriage paſs her window in our way to church, ſhe made her footman watch our return, with a meſſage informing us of her abode, and requeſting that we would take immediate advantage of the information. Delighted with this intelligence, ſo unexpected too, as Mrs. Weldon, when at the chateau, had not once dropped any hint of an intention to re-viſit England, we requeſted Mrs. Hindon to ſet us down at her houſe. She gave us the kindeſt reception poſſible: and on our part, we felt as if we had met one in whom we were warmly intereſted, and who was nearly connected with us. She informed us that buſineſs relative to a legacy lately bequeathed her had obliged her to come over at a ſudden call, and that ſhe had left our much reſpected friends in good health.

How ſtrangely do circumſtances, apparently the moſt trifling, alter our opinions and prepoſſeſſions! This Mrs. Weldon, whom I thought at beſt but an agreeable coquet, and whoſe friendſhip I had in Languedoc no ſort of deſire to cultivate, now ſcarcely appears to me the perſon ſhe was, except in her powers of pleaſing, which are if poſſible augmented. The change

change is not however entirely owing to the partiality with which I could not but regard an acquaintance formed under the roof of our worthy friend; the alteration is in herſelf; and I now perceive how illiberal and injudicious are often the ſentiments and impreſſions inſpired by an imperfect knowledge. Mrs. Weldon, in her own houſe, and in private poſſeſſes not merely the gaiety which amuſes, but that good ſenſe and knowledge of the world which muſt charm and improve all who are admitted to an intimacy with her. Theſe good qualities are blended with a flow of ſpirits uncommonly elevated, which diffuſes a vivacity over her manner and appearance that on a ſuperficial acquaintance may be miſtaken for levity, but which, on a nearer view, I find proves merely the natural reſult of a ſprightly turn of mind, added to an early introduction into life; circumſtances that in general give defiance to baſhfulneſs, at leaſt to that painful degree of it that accompanies awkwardneſs.

She was ſo kind as to inſiſt on our remaining with her the whole day, and at her earneſt requeſt an apology was diſpatched to Mrs. Hindon; indeed I have not ſpent one ſo entirely to my ſatisfaction ſince my arrival. Mrs. Weldon was equally amuſing, whether we converſed on gay or ſerious ſubjects; and uninterrupted by company, we chatted over affairs that mutually intereſted us.

I was extremely ſorry however to find that ſhe did not regard Madame de Clarence with that cordial eſteem which I imagined every one muſt be diſpoſed to feel for a character ſo amiable; and ſhe let us into ſome little circumſtances relating to family diſſentions, which I never

ſhould have ſuſpected to have occurred between a couple who always behave, at leaſt in company, with the utmoſt apparent good humour and politeneſs to each other. Mrs. Weldon even told us, that poor Madame de Clarence has an unfortunate failing in her temper, which renders herſelf and her huſband equally miſerable: ſhe poſſeſſes, it ſeems, an unhappy degree of jealouſy, that leads her to conclude almoſt every young woman, whoſe viſits are frequent in the family, the object of Monſieur de Clarence's affections; and no ſooner is ſhe convinced of her error in one place, than her ſuſpicions are turned to another quarter, however improbable and extraordinary.

This is a moſt unfortunate diſpoſition, and ſincerely to be lamented; for I fear, according to Mrs. Weldon's account, it is quite incurable. She gave me innumerable inſtances of her weakneſs in this particular; and added, that as ſhe had been for ſome time an inmate of her family, ſhe had not failed herſelf to experience the effects of her temper in this point.

I expreſſed my ſurprize that this unlucky foible ſhould never have been hinted to me till now, nor the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of a turn of mind ſo adverſe to her tranquillity ever occur to my mind during the whole period of my acquaintance with Madame de Clarence.

You was the laſt perſon, ſaid ſhe, to whom ſuch an information was likely to be ſuggeſted. The ſtrict intimacy that ſubſiſted between you was ſufficiently known to deter all malicious or officious diſpoſed perſons from entertaining you with a topic ſo little agreeable as the errors of your friend; and the circle you ranged in was ever ſo limited, that large as is the propor-

tion

tion of the world which comes under theſe deſcriptions, I believe there were very few of either claſs that could be ranked among the number of your acquaintance.

But pray, added ſhe, had you never occaſion to remark, during your laſt viſit, that Madame behaved to me with a diſtance wholly unaccountable, and which muſt, I think, have provoked both your obſervation and ſurprize? The real truth of the matter was, that as my acquaintance with the family originated through Monſieur, who lived in terms of the ſtricteſt friendſhip with poor Mr. Weldon, and to whom I was in ſome meaſure given in charge by my huſband in his laſt moments, the lady never regarded me with much kindneſs; but conſcious ſhe herſelf poſſeſſes not addreſs ſufficient to preſerve her huſband's affections, ſhe ſuſpects every pretty woman ſhe ſees to be more in favour than herſelf, and charitably accuſes her of the theft.

That Madame de Clarence diſapproved of Mrs. Weldon's behaviour I well knew, nor was I ignorant that ſhe was no great favourite with that lady; but as I could not myſelf avoid joining in the cenſure which her coquetry incurred, it made no impreſſion on my mind at the time, nor could excite either ſurprize or ſuſpicion: our lively little friend, mean while, happy in the poſſeſſion of unbounded ſpirits, dreamt not of this ſevere judgment on her gaiety till after Fanny and I left the chateau, when the augmented reſerve and ſolemn deportment of Madame de Clarence ſoon gave place to an open manifeſtation of her repugnance and diſlike.

Her ſententious harangues, ſaid Mrs. Weldon, (who always expreſſes herſelf with force, and

and on this occaſion may be forgiven the exaggeration of reſentment) and thread-bare lectures on the dignity of a proper retinue in the ſex, were ſuddenly converted into plain invectives againſt the licentiouſneſs of the preſent age, and the unprincipled levity of all its daughters, whether maids, wives or widows; thoſe of the latter denomination had, you may believe, ſufficient juſtice done them; till at laſt it was impoſſible for me any longer to miſtake my own reſemblance in the pictures ſhe continually drew of thoſe profligate females, who having buried the man, either agreeable or otherwiſe, who had once received their vows, dared to be happy, and preſumed to confeſs it too after they had regained their freedom.

For my own part, continued ſhe, united by my friends early in life to a man twice my age, I am ſatisfied with having performed my duty to him when alive, without conſidering myſelf as obliged to mourn his loſs when gone; and bleſſed with conſcious innocence, I allow myſelf thoſe liberties in which a mind free and at eaſe is glad to rejoice after a tedious bondage. However, finding Madame de Clarence was always grave when I laughed, and ſorrowful when I was gay, I began to ſuſpect that I had worn out her patience by too long a viſit, and under this notion was preparing to take a civil departure, when one day, in a little arbour (you may remember it I believe, it is at the entrance into the wood) in the little arbour, where I had taken refuge in a fine evening, to avoid exciting a rudeneſs of behaviour for which I could aſſign no adequate motive, I was unexpectedly joined by Monſieur who ſeeing me ſeated, naturally enough,

enough, you know, placed himſelf by me and entered into converſation.

On mentioning my intentions of leaving the chateau next morning, he confeſſed, with an ingenuity which our friendſhip of long ſtanding fully authorized, that he could not but approve of the prudence which dictated this ſtep, and acnowledged to me that a jealouiy of temper, which formed, he ſaid, the miſery of both their lives, had ſo encreaſed inſtead of abating with his wife's years, that it was grown quite inſupportable: it is then no wonder, added he, in a friendly manner, that you ſhould at laſt become the object of her ſuſpicions, ſince fifty women, fifty times your inferior, have by turns excited them.

This I allow, continued Mrs. Weldon, muſt have ſounded ſomewhat complimentary to an ear, the organs of which were diſordered by jealouſy; and juſt at that inſtant who ſhould we ſee gliding by the trees but Madame herſelf, who had been without doubt liſtening to a ſketch of her own character, not much either ſoftened or embelliſhed from the lips of her huſband, and done perhaps rather a little in *caricatura*. But one muſt pardon him ſome degree of exaggeration from a juſt exaſperation at her unceaſing and teazing importunities.

After this little adventure, you may ſuppoſe it was time for me to be gone. Madame pretended indiſpoſition, and kept her room the reſt of the evening; breakfaſted next morning *chez elle*; and I left the chateau, having received only a meſſage that ſhe was ſorry ſhe could not ſee me before I went.

Poor Madame de Clarence! I pity her from my ſoul: it was indeed impoſſible to hear that my

my worthy friend was unhappy, even though owing to her own unfortunate weakneſs, without ſincerely deploring that fault which is attended, I am convinced, by no other in her boſom: but what a number of great and amiable qualities will not this ſingle error obſcure in a huſband's eyes!

Till now, I always concluded Monſieur in fault; and that to the cold civility of his manner, thoſe clouds were owing which during our laſt viſit I ſometimes obſerved hanging on his lady's brow. He was always indeed ſcrupulouſly polite in his attentions to her; but his behaviour ſeemed the ſtudied effuſions of good breeding and propriety, to which, from her rank in life, and the ſplendid fortune ſhe brought him, ſhe juſtly lays claim. I heartily lament however, that ſhe ſhould have carried her ſuſpicions to lengths ſo blameable: lengths which muſt operate towards augmenting the alienation ſhe deplores.

This unexpected and delightful rencontre, together with the agreeable alteration in Mrs. Weldon's manners, entirely diſcarded the reſerve with which I uſed formerly to converſe with her; and upon her talking openly of her affairs, which are at preſent ſomewhat embarraſſed, I made no ſcruple of acquainting her with the circumſtances of our ſituation, ſo replete with difficulties, ſo ſingularly perplexing uncomfortable.

She entered kindly and with intereſt into all our anxieties, and told us that ſome years ago Lady Linroſe and her family were not unknown to her. That was before ſhe ſeparated from her huſband, ſaid ſhe; but ſhe never was a woman by any means to my taſte; for though her Ladyſhip

Ladyſhip can make herſelf extremely agreeable where ſhe pleaſes, ſhe is intolerably proud, exceedingly fond of money, and as artful as the devil. I dare to ſay ſhe was more to blame than her Lord, though ſhe has been cunning enough to perſuade the world, and even Lord Belmont, that his peeviſh humour rendered her life a burthen to her. No doubt he was a very capricious, ill tempered man; but I believe he had provocation ſufficient. I aſk pardon, however, my dears, for talking of your aunt with ſo little ceremony; though to own the truth, when you come to know her as well as I do, your opinion will probably coincide with mine.

I aſſured Mrs. Weldon ſhe might uſe all manner of freedom, and eagerly enquired if all the family exhibited portraits equally unfavourable.

The eldeſt daughter, ſaid ſhe, is as proud to the full as her mother, and ſtill more deficient in good humour; but the ſecond, who was ſcarce twelve years old when I left England, was the ſweeteſt moſt enchanting little girl in the world; and I really think reſembled you, Miſs Seymour, extremely. I here was always ſome perſon in my head, when I ſaw you in Languedoc, that you ſtruck me with having a likeneſs to, and now I recollect it is your couſin, Miſs Lucy Dudley. There is another daughter, but ſhe was then quite a child; and there are two ſons; the eldeſt is a very good young man I am told, but his talents I believe are not ſhining; the youngeſt, however, when I laſt ſaw him, was a blooming youth of eighteen, captivating as an Adonis, and in all reſpects amiable and engaging. I hear he has by no means diſ-

appointed

appointed the hopes inſpired by his juvenile perfections, either in point of mind or perſon, for he is by all accounts a very extraordinary young man, and I have been informed poſſeſſes a degree of influence over Lord Belmont, with whom he is at preſent abroad, which I think you muſt regard as a favourable circumſtance in your ſituation; for a ſingle glance from either of you muſt intereſt him in your cauſe.

Mrs. Hindon's carriage being at this time announced, we took our leave, and on our return found a card of invitation from Lady Farnford to accompany her to the play to-morrow evening.

DEC. 23.

We were delighted beyond expreſſion laſt night. The inimitable Mrs. Siddons ſurpaſſes all that can either be conceived or deſcribed. Added to the moſt exquiſite taſte and feeling, ſhe poſſeſſes a countenance the moſt expreſſive, over which ſhe enjoys a command the moſt inconceivable.

However pleaſing to a perſon unaccuſtomed to the glare of a public exhibition, the effect of the company, the various decorations, and the diſpoſition of the different lights, muſt at firſt prove, yet the inſtant the curtain drew up my eyes were immoveably fixed on the ſtage, nor would it, I imagined, have been in the power of any other object for a moment to have engaged my attention.

I ſoon found however that Mrs. Siddons, all powerful as ſhe is, could not wholly engroſs it; for on caſting my eyes round the houſe, I diſcovered

covered Mr. Roatſley in the adjoining box. As he ſat alone, I could not avoid flattering myſelf that he would join us as he had done the week before, and Fanny and I could have eaſily contrived room for him, although the houſe was extremely crouded; but to my no ſmall regret he did not appear to have the moſt diſtant thought of approaching. On perceiving us he indeed inſtantly bowed; but with a degree of coldneſs and reſerve which almoſt diſconcerted me; and though from the accidental change of places there was a ſpare ſeat by us moſt part of the evening, far from wiſhing to take poſſeſſion of it, he never once came near the box.

Aſtoniſhed at a change really ſtriking, as well as unaccountable after the flow of civility with which he had before attended us at the ſame place, I tried in vain to diſcover what could poſſibly have occaſioned the alteration; but I could only reſt my concluſions on that fickleneſs and caprice of which all his ſex have been ſo vehemently accuſed by ours, and of which, tho' I have ſeen nothing, I have read and heard much.

Poſſeſſed with this idea, I endeavoured to ſatisfy myſelf; but another ſoon accompanied it, which partook perhaps not a little of the weakneſs attributed to our ſex: I ſuſpected that we did not improve upon intimacy; and that diſappointed in the expectations which at firſt induced him to cultivate the acquaintance, he wiſhed to let it drop. Soon after the firſt act was concluded, I took notice that we were evidently the ſubject of his converſation with another gentleman who had joined him; an idea

which

which you may believe did not leſſen my perplexity.

Roatſley ſeemed to regard me with looks of anxious gravity; while the countenance of his companion, whom to my no ſmall ſurprize I recollected to be our late fellow lodger, Captain Bradſhaw, manifeſted nothing but ſatisfaction.

Juſt as the fourth act was concluded, Lady Farnford beckoned to a lady behind, deſiring her to inform her ſon, who could not get admittance for the croud, that a ſeat was kept for him on the bench on which I was ſitting.

Way was therefore made for the gentleman: but gueſs my aſtoniſhment and regret, when I found that this ſon of Lady Farnford's was the profligate and audacious young man who had terrified me at Mrs. Brumpton's. I was ſhocked on ſeeing him; nor was my perturbation abated, you may believe, from finding that his mother meant to place him by me.

Without having time to conſider, I determined that no degree of ill-judged baſhfulneſs ſhould prevent me from manifeſting a reſentment ſo juſtly incurred; I therefore haſtily entreated a lady who ſat on the bench behind, to allow me to change places with her, as I wiſhed to ſpeak with my ſiſter; and having by this little artifice contrived to place myſelf at ſome diſtance from him, I pretended to be earneſtly engaged in converſation with Fanny. Lady Farnford however ſoon tapped me with her fan, and aſked leave to introduce her ſon. I was then abſolutely obliged to turn round, and perceived in his countenance an aſtoniſhment and confuſion which ought indeed to have wholly overpowered him; but he ſeemed to recover himſelf very ſpeedily; at leaſt he obtained ſufficient

cient command over his feelings to pay me the uſual compliments, though I believe, for I hardly deigned to look at him, not without embarraſſment. As for me, I ſcarcely bowed my head, and inſtantly turned from him with unfeigned indignation.

I believe his mother was not a little confounded at the rudeneſs of my behaviour; but without giving myſelf the trouble of conſidering what interpretation ſhe might put on it it, I continued to talk with Fanny, who was almoſt equally vexed at this rencontre.

I ſaw Roatſley's eyes were fixed on our party, and perceived him whiſper his friend. Overcome with a variety of emotions, added to the intenſe heat, I felt myſelf now ſuddenly extremely ſick, and apprehenſive of fainting, immediately roſe. You may conjecture the buſtle which enſued: I was carried out almoſt inſenſible, ſupported in the arms of the odious Farnford, who ventured to aſſiſt me while I was unable to repulſe him, and attended by his mother and Fanny.

They ſtopped in the paſſage to give me air and adminiſter eau de luce, ſalts, &c. before they ventured to call a chair, and juſt at that inſtant Roatſley and his friend came up. The former, hoping I was recovering from the bad effects of the heat, walked on with a formal bow; and the other giving Farnford a ſignificant ſmile, ſaid to him in a loud whiſper as he paſſed—I give you joy, Farnford; there is no need of my introduction now I perceive.

Shocked to the ſoul, I exerted all my returning ſtrength, and diſengaging myſelf entirely from Farnford, who had preſumed to ſupport me with his arm, I told Lady Farnford I was much

much better, and wiſhed inſtantly to go home in a chair, as Mrs. Hindon's carriage could not have arrived ſo early.

If you think there is no danger of a relapſe, anſwered ſhe, in my opinion Miſs Seymour you had better return to your place till my ſon enquires if my coach, which ſhall obey your commands, is in waiting.

I inſiſted however upon going directly; and her ſon, who ſeemed to aim at covering the awkwardneſs he could not avoid feeling under an appearance of rude indifference, ſaid, with an air of unconcern, O you can eaſily have a couple of chairs if you will go, and walked away to order them.

I ſuppoſe he was glad of an opportunity of leaving us; for to my great joy inſtead of returning himſelf he ſent a boxkeeper to inform us that chairs were procured.

Where is my ſon? cried Lady Farnford. But happily no ſon appeared; and deſiring that her footman might be ordered to ſee us ſafe home, ſhe wiſhed us good night.

When we came to the door, we found Farnford ſtanding with Mr. Roatſley and Captain Bradſhaw. Will you give me leave to ſee you through the crowd? ſaid Farnford to me with the moſt perfect eaſe. I replied only by withdrawing the hand he had ſeized, and by an air (I cannot call it a look for I had ſcarce courage to look at him) of averſion and contempt. He was diſconcerted I believe; but covering it with a ſmile of effrontery, ſtepped back, and inſtantly Mr. Roatſley advancing, offered his ſervices with a politeneſs and reſpect which gave me the only ſenſation of ſatisfaction I had felt that evening. I curtſeyed in ſilence; and accepting

accepting his hand, he conducted me to my chair, after which he left me to perform the ſame office to Fanny.

Fortunately Mr. and Mrs. Hindon were both engaged abroad, ſo that I inſtantly went to bed; where inſtead of ſleeping I ruminated moſt part of the night on the diſagreeable occurrences of the preceding day.

My reflections were not indeed of the moſt comfortable nature. My dear father's loſs, attended, alas! by a multitude of circumſtances additionally painful and perplexing, have kept my mind for ſome months paſt in a ſtate of unceaſing agitation; and the ſuſpence in which we continue at preſent, from the unaccountable ſilence of Lady Linroſe to Mr. Howard's letter, conſpires to give me unſpeakable uneaſineſs. My paſt ſufferings, as well as preſent anxieties, by weakening my mind and exhauſting my ſpirits, render me doubly ſuſceptible of every ſlight vexation; the probability therefore, nay almoſt certainty, in ſpite of my moſt vigilant precautions, of meeting frequently with Captain Farnford while I reſide in a family who are upon a footing of intimacy with his, diſtreſſes me prodigiouſly, and I muſt alſo confeſs, although I am ſenſible how abſurd beyond meaſure it is to allow myſelf to be hurt from the caprice of others, that I cannot help regretting the change in Mr. Roatſley's behaviour, becauſe he appears ſo extremely oppoſite from a man who would permit himſelf to be governed by mere whim. My thoughts are conſtantly employed in conjecturing what could poſſibly have occaſioned an alteration ſo apparent. It is however of little importance in itſelf; but it is ſo different from his former behaviour, that ſome prejudice muſt

muſt have excited him to this conduct; and there is not I believe a more painful ſenſation than that occaſioned by having unjuſtly loſt the good opinion of thoſe we eſteem.

Is it not aſtoniſhing that we hear nothing of Lady Linroſe? We begin to fear the letter cannot have found its way to her Ladyſhip.

Adieu.

LETTER VII.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

DEC. 26.

YESTERDAY morning, Mrs. Hindon, whom as yet I had not let into any particulars relating to the odious Farnford, informed me that Sir Jonathan's family were that day to take a Chriſtmas dinner with us. You have hardly ſeen the beſt part of it, ſaid ſhe. Their ſon, the Captain, is a mighty pretty young man, and extremely clever and agreeable. He wiſhes of all things in the world to be introduced to you; and her Ladyſhip told me he has abſolutely raved about Miſs Seymour ſince he ſaw her two nights ago at the play. He ſwears there was nobody there to be compared with her either for grace or beauty. He has been out of town lately, or you ſhould have ſeen him before now. I aſſure you, ladies, continued ſhe, before I had time to reply, he is no contemptible conqueſt. Beſides his father's fortune, which to be ſure is not ſo good as it has been, he has expectations from a rich relation,

and

and is an only ſon, with the incumbrance of but one ſiſter's fortune, and ſhe you ſee is a puny, poor thing. Lady Farnford brought a good fifteen hundred per annum with her. Sir Jonathan's eſtate was originally as much more; and although no doubt ſome of it is gone, there are ſtill excellent pickings left. They have been ſome years on a frugal plan too; ſo that I dare ſay things are almoſt clear by this time. Indeed, Miſs Seymour, I wiſh with all my heart this may turn out a match. You know the young man is my couſin; and I ſhould be happy to have the honour of being related to you. Come, Miſs Fanny, don't you think it would do charmingly?

I am not acquainted with him, ſaid Fanny drily.

Well, I hope you'll both become better acquainted with him in time. But Lord, look how Miſs Seymour bluſhes: well things will come about, I'll lay a good wager, cried ſhe, laughing immoderately at the confuſion which the ſound of the wretch's name unavoidably occaſioned me. Come, continued ſhe, with her uſual volubility, you ſaw him at the play I know; well tell truth honeſtly, is he not extremely handſome?

Indeed, Madam, anſwered I, I am ſorry to differ from you; but I don't think he has the ſlighteſt pretenſions to it.

Nay this is downright coquetry. I'm certain you cannot think as you ſpeak. You are afraid I'll tell; but I promiſe you I ſhall keep the ſecret.

I hope then you will allow me to entruſt you with it, cried I much provoked and in the midſt of a long harangue, for when eager on a ſub-

ject

ject Mrs. Hindon never allows any one but herſelf to talk. I interrupted her by explaining the too juſt occaſion her couſin had given me for the moſt determined repugnance and diſlike. I ſoon however regretted the confidence I had placed in her, when I found that inſtead of being ſhocked at the recital, ſhe appeared ſo highly entertained that I thought ſhe would have fallen from her chair, ſhe laughed ſo violently.

Oh! cried ſhe at length, I never heard ſuch a good ſtory in my life. And ſo he really miſtook you for a woman of the town? How confounded then he muſt have been to find you in his mother's party, and placed on the ſame bench with her at Drury-lane! I ſhould have been quite delighted to have ſeen his aſtoniſhment and confuſion: he muſt have looked ſo droll.

There could not have been much *confuſion* in the caſe, ſaid I, ſince he wiſhes to throw himſelf again in my way.

No doubt he is ſenſible of his error, and deſires to be received into favour.

I then very ſeriouſly told her that I was determined not to ſee Captain Farnford if I poſſibly could avoid it, and ſhould be infinitely obliged to her if ſhe would be ſo kind as to inform me when ſhe knew of his viſits, entreating that ſhe would permit me to keep my apartment on ſuch occaſions. To this, after ſome remonſtrances, ſhe unwillingly conſented; though I could eaſily perceive ſhe thought my behaviour an unneceſſary refinement of delicacy, which I had impoſed on myſelf out of an abſurd idea of propriety.

After the company were gone, Mrs. Hindon returned to relieve me, ſhe ſaid, from my impriſonment, and entertained me the whole remaining

ing part of the evening with the Captain's accompliſhments: he was the moſt agreeable young man—ſo like a man of faſhion—ſo much at his eaſe—ſo lively—indeed, Miſs Seymour, you muſt have been quite mollified had you ſeen how diſmal and mortified he looked during dinner.

What, Madam, cried I, after being ſo lively.

Oh I mean when your indiſpoſition was mentioned: and indeed I could ſcarcely talk of it without laughing; to think you was above ſtairs in perfect health all the while he was regretting your illneſs as ſo great a misfortune. However I whiſpered the truth to her Ladyſhip.

I am indeed extremely ſorry you did, Madam, cried I. I thought you had promiſed me not to mention to any perſon an adventure in which I bluſh ever to have been involved.

Oh! there was no harm, you know, in telling it to Lady Farnford. I aſſure you ſhe blamed her ſon very much, and ſaid ſhe did not wonder at your reſentment; only ſhe hoped it would not be carried too far; for that he was moſt paſſionately in love with you, and though he had been too much penetrated with his behaviour to confeſs it to her when his firſt meeting with you took place, ſhe was certain he was thoroughly vexed at the accident, which muſt have entirely reſulted from intoxication, and his miſtaking you for one of thoſe ladies who appear in ſuch crowds in the duſk of the evening; for nothing on earth Captain Farnford wiſhed ſo anxiouſly as to render himſelf agreeable to you: and indeed, Miſs Seymour, I muſt own, that too much fuſs about this affair is beſtowing an importance on it greater than it deſerves.

ſerves. It would be better, I ſhould imagine, after having teſtified your diſpleaſure as you have now ſufficiently done, to appear as if you had forgot it.

Forgot it, Madam! cried I. I muſt poſſeſs a very ſlight memory indeed if I am capable of forgetting behaviour like his. I do not intend to make any fuſs about it; all I wiſh is to avoid him; and if chance ſhould introduce him where I am, all the reſentment I ſhould diſcover would be to regard him as an utter ſtranger. I have ſeen enough of his character to cure me of all deſire for his acquanitance; and as to the paſſion you tell me he has conceived for me, and which muſt be altogether imaginary, give me leave to ſay that had I never beheld him in a point of view ſo diſagreeable, it would have been equally unſucceſsful.

I pronounced this in a tone ſo grave and determined, that Mrs. Hindon looked ſurprized.

Well, well, Miſs Seymour, I had no commiſſion to carry the Captain's propoſals, ſo have no intention to be the bearer of his refuſal; and ſoon after Mr. Hindon coming in, the converſation ſhifted to other topics.

This morning a card arrived from Sir Jonathan and Lady Farnford, enquiring after my health, and adding, that they hoped it would not prevent me from accompanying my ſiſter and this family to dinner with them on Thurſday. Mrs. Hindon diſtreſſed me exceedingly by obſtinately perſiſting in a reſolution to remain at home if we would not conſent to go; and though I was both teized and vexed at her ill judged civility, I was conſtrained to make her ſuffer for her complaiſance. A polite apology was therefore diſpatched.

This

DEC. 24.

This moment, Sophia, a card is brought from Lady Linſoſe. She is in town, and writes as follows:

Lady Linroſe preſents her compliments to Mr. Howard, and requeſts he would take the trouble to call in St. James's Square this evening about ſix o'clock, as Lady Linroſe wiſhes to converſe with him on the ſubject of the letter ſhe received ſome time ſince.

Oh! Sophia! how infinitely intereſting are theſe few lines! The agitation they have given us is unſpeakable. I believe Fanny has read them over fifty times, and examined with eagerneſs and curioſity the formation of every letter. She draws a favourable interpretation from Lady Linroſe being arrived in town, and is ſo extremely ſanguine, that ſhe has infected me with expectations which I can hardly conceive myſelf ſo happy as to find realized.

Adieu till the evening, when you ſhall know the reſult of all this perturbation.

DEC. 28.

Well, my dear—But I will not anticipate. Mr. Howard, whoſe friendly anxiety equalled if not ſurpaſſed our own, went to St. James's Square, a few minutes before ſix, and was uſhered into the drawing room, where her Ladyſhip allowed him to wait a full hour before ſhe made her appearance.

She then entered. He deſcribed her to us (for you may believe we were minute in our enquiries) as a woman of a very majeſtic figure, but whoſe addreſs, imperious and diſdainful, freezes

the beholder at firſt ſight, and inſpires only diſtance and reſerve.

I had the favour of a letter from you ſome time ago, Sir, ſaid ſhe, but as I imagined the ſubject of which it treated would be better diſcuſſed by an interview than by writing, I delayed an anſwer till it was in my power to come to town. You tell me, Sir, continued ſhe, that two daughters of the late unfortunate Lord Linroſe are come over from his retreat in France, under the idea that my Lord Belmont will be induced to countenance and acknowledge them. This, admitting that *they really are* his children, was ſurely a very ſtrange and unaccountable ſtep. It is indeed extraordinary to ſuppoſe that his Lordſhip, ſo juſtly irritated againſt their father, whoſe ill conduct, not to ſay crimes, have been the deſtruction of his peace and the ruin of his conſtitution, will be eaſily if ever prevailed with to favour with his notice, two girls who are the pledges of family diſhonour, and the offspring of a calamity which has loaded his declining years with affliction. I think it would have been at leaſt prudent in their friends to have adviſed them to ſound my Lord's intentions before they ventured on a proceeding ſo raſh as that of leaving the Continent without his permiſſion.

Mr. Howard then explained that our journey was in conſequence of the commands of a gentleman who had been left our guardian, but who on our arrival we found had unfortunately expired a few days before.

I am much ſurpriſed, ſaid ſhe, that any gentleman ſhould take upon him to act in ſuch intricate circumſtances without my Lord Bel-

mont's approbation, who alone was empowered to fix their reſidence where he pleaſed.

Mr. Benſeley could not be certain, Madam, ſaid Mr. Howard, that my Lord would at all concern himſelf about his grand children, after the unhappy event which had ſo long excluded them from his knowledge: it was therefore natural in him to propoſe what plan he thought moſt conducive to their advantage, deferring an application to his Lordſhip till the arrival of the young ladies in England; when he doubted not they would ſufficiently plead their own cauſe the moment they were preſented to his ſight.

Indeed the aſſiſtance of natural affection, continued Mr. Howard, would have been, I am perſuaded, hardly neceſſary to ſubdue his Lordſhip's feelings on this occaſion; however irritated they might prove, a heart like Lord Belmont's could not have beheld unmoved, two lovely young women, bleſt with every amiable quality of the heart and every inſinuating grace of the form, kneeling at his feet for favour; and I am convinced when your Ladyſhip has once ſeen them, an inſtantaneous prepoſſeſſion muſt inevitably follow.

His Lordſhip, had he been in England, replied ſhe with coldneſs, would doubtleſs have acted in that caſe as he thought proper. I perceive however, Sir, that you appear much too ſanguine in your expectations. None of Lord Belmont's friends have ever dared for many years to revive the recollection of the unhappy tranſactions relating to the late Lord, by any mention of him or his family; a ſubject which muſt have given an infinite ſhock to a frame ſo exhauſted and reduced as my Lord's now is; nor

nor is it my own private opinion, founded on a perfect knowledge of the inflexibility of his temper, that he will ever be perſuaded to beſtow his favour or countenance on his unfortunate ſon's children.

My endeavours, however, ſhall not be wanting, Sir, to prevail with him, if poſſible, to perform what certainly would be an act of humanity; and as the young ladies are probably anxious to know their deſtiny, I ſhall not only write to Lord Belmont to enforce their claims, but ſhall take courage to aſſail him with all the rhetoric in my power. He is at preſent at Nice, and his anſwer cannot be long in finding its way hither.

Mr. Howard thanked her Ladyſhip in warm terms for this offer, which in ſome meaſure ſoftened the harſh ſeverity of her preceding diſcourſe, and kindly added a thouſand circumſtances and recommendations calculated to animate and encourage the dawning intereſt ſhe began to teſtify in the cauſe.

There is however one thing I muſt premiſe Sir, added ſhe; the young ladies may perhaps be led to expect that I will invite them to my houſe, and give them my notice and protection; but till my Lord's reſolution is known, I muſt be excuſed from venturing on a conduct which I have reaſon to apprehend may meet with his diſapprobation. The hour that brings me his Lordſhip's permiſſion, I ſhall receive my nieces with all the cordiality and ſatisfaction imaginable; till that arrives, I muſt needs ſay that I think the more private they remain, and the leſs they are beheld in public, the better; and I ſhould adviſe their friends to perſuade them into this meaſure.

Mr.

Mr. Howard, who by the expreſſion *their friends* knew was meant only himſelf, replied—your Ladyſhip cannot imagine that in this country, where the young ladies arrived ſo lately, they poſſeſs many friends; but I hope, as they are perfectly deſerving of thoſe given them by nature, a prejudice, which you muſt allow me to call unjuſt, will not deprive them of one day poſſeſſing their regard. I make no doubt but that till Lord Belmont's anſwer arrives, or till their relations chooſe to introduce them, they will not of themſelves incline either to aſſume the family name, which they have not yet borne, or to appear in the world as his grand children.

In this particular I approve extremely of their prudence and delicacy, anſwered her Ladyſhip, and ſincerely wiſh them the ſucceſs their conduct in this point ſo juſtly merits. Indeed it would be the height of impropriety to let the world into thoſe family ſecrets, till they can with propriety be diſcloſed; and they ought undoubtedly to continue under the name of Seymour till Lord Belmont allows of the change; and in the interim I ſhall moſt willingly undertake to convey any letter or packet the young ladies may be inclined to tranſmit to my Lord Belmont.

Well, my dear Sir, cried Fanny, who had watched his return at the window, what ſucceſs?

I am not much pleaſed with the intelligence your countenance divulges, cried I.

My face is not then to be truſted, ſaid he, for at this moment I ſcarce know whether to be pleaſed or not. Lady Linroſe has diſſatisfied me without giving me any juſt grounds for complaint.

complaint. She expreſſes herſelf in your favour, and aſſures me ſhe will back your claims with all her intereſt, yet her manner, unintereſted and cold, contradicts what her tongue avers, and though rectitude may compel her to be your advocate, generoſity will not, I fear, induce her warmly to become your friend.

He then related minutely and circumſtantially all that had paſſed between them. I think, ſaid he, when he had concluded, you ought undoubtedly to addreſs your grand father in your own name, nor truſt to the pen of another a cauſe of ſo much moment. A letter, warm from the heart, and breathing the genuine ſentiments of duty and affection, cannot fail to ſoften and intereſt him.

I agreed perfectly in this opinion, and inſtantly retired to ſet about the taſk. You will perhaps imagine that it would not prove an eaſy one: but I found it attended with no ſort of difficulty. To write forcibly, little more is neceſſary than to be animated thoroughly with your ſubject. In this caſe, a thouſand expreſſions of energy and warmth give a ſtrength and eloquence to your ſtyle not to be attained by an unimpaſſioned writer; and as I did not affect what my heart did not feel, my epiſtle was extremely ſimple, though my tears, by blotting ſeveral, obliged me to write more than one copy.

TO THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF BELMONT.

Will my Lord Belmont permit his grand children to addreſs him by the tender appellation which the ties of blood, and the moſt fervent ſentiments of duty and veneration, equally prompt them to uſe? Alas! it is but lately we knew

knew there yet exiſted a parent to whom theſe feelings were ſtill due; and the ſame inſtant that beſtowed an information ſo unthought of, ſo fraught with wonder and perplexity, overwhelmed us with the ſudden knowledge of a thouſand cruel circumſtances to poiſon and embitter the pleaſing intelligence.

Among theſe, not the leaſt dreadful is the apprehenſion—an apprehenſion which ſinks us to the loweſt ebb of deſpondency—that this venerable parent may forbid our claims, and remain, as he has hitherto done, a ſtranger and unknown to us.

Oh! my Lord! can your heart always continue unmoved to the gentle and inſinuating voice of nature; or in a boſom, where rectitude is ſaid to hold its empire, can reſentment ſo long retain its violence, and prejudice its inflexibility? Ah! no! one day I truſt I ſhall bluſh for having for an inſtant encouraged a ſuſpicion ſo unworthy, ſo contrary to that juſtice which forms, we are told, the baſis of Lord Belmont's character. We ſhall not mourn a ſecond father, more cruelly torn from us than by the hands of death, while the traces of thoſe tears which flowed for the firſt are hardly effaced from our eyes.

We are in England, my Lord, by the advice of a gentleman who was left our guardian, and who I believe was once not unknown to you. We arrrived about three weeks ago, and had the inexpreſſible mortification to find that Mr. Benſeley had expired but a few days before. To add to this misfortune, we were told your Lordſhip was abroad; and informed that till you condeſcended to acknowledge us, thoſe of

our family who remained could not venture to afford us even their notice.

I think I need inſiſt on no further particulars in order to enforce to your Lordſhip how uncomfortable, how painfully depreſſing, the ſituation of two young women muſt prove, who find themſelves in a foreign and unknown country, unconnected in the midſt of their numerous relations, and ſtrangers, though ſurrounded by their natural friends.

Till your Lordſhip's reſolution with regard to us is made known, we muſt continue in this obſcure, this miſerable ſtate, unacknowledged, unnoticed, and deſerted, while unconſcious of meriting repulſe, or of deſerving this contempt and deſertion.

The favour of a few lines from your Lordſhip's hand, directed under cover to Laurence Howard, Eſq. Britiſh Coffee Houſe, a gentleman to whom we are under infinite obligations, and with whoſe ſiſter we at preſent reſide, will either relieve our minds from a cruel load of painful ſuſpenſe or finally put a period to thoſe expectations, the uncertainty of which have deprived us for ſome months of comfort and reſt.

We remain, with unfeigned reſpect,
your Lordſhip's moſt dutiful children,

HERMIONE AND FRANCES DUDLEY.

I made Fanny join in the ſignature. It appeared very ſtrange to us to add a name ſo entirely new, nor could I hardly perſuade myſelf I had any right to claim it.

When the letter was finiſhed, I carried it down ſtairs in order to ſubmit it to Mr. Howard's

ard's peruſal, who was fortunately alone. He was affected with the warmth with which I had expreſſed myſelf: but my words were faint when compared with my feelings while I tranſmitted them to paper. Melted with the tender idea that I was yet allowed to addreſs myſelf to a ſurviving parent, I effaced the writing with my tears. A tear dropped down the cheek of Mr. Howard while he read. If Lord Belmont can indeed remain deaf to the voice of nature, ſaid he, when ſhe pleads in ſuch language as this, his heart cannot have been compoſed of thoſe flexible materials of which thoſe of other men are formed.

He undertook himſelf to give it this day to Lady Linroſe, that it mght accompany her diſpatches for Nice. H. SEYMOUR.

LETTER VIII.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

JAN. 12.

THIS preſuming wretch Farnford, inſtead of avoiding me, as I flattered myſelf he would have done, after the repugnance I have teſtified towards the ſlighteſt intercourſe with him, this morning called while we were at breakfaſt.

It was both painful and awkward for me to find myſelf in the ſame room with him; and in ſpite of all Mrs. Hindon's attempts to draw me into converſation, I maintained a profound ſilence, looked grave and reſerved, and the moment I had done breakfaſt left the parlour.

Mrs..

Mrs. Hindon, with all her civility, ſhews very little complaiſance in this particular. Though ſhe well knew the reluctance I felt to ſeeing him, ſhe had undoubtedly invited him to ſupper; for ſoon after he was gone ſhe came up ſtairs and informed me that the poor Captain found himſelf ſo miſerable when at a diſtance from me, that he had aſked leave to return in the evening.

I ſaid nothing, for certainly I had no right to preſcribe to Mrs. Hindon what company ſhe ſhould admit to her houſe; but the moment ſhe left me, I took a chair to Mrs. Weldon's, and in the Captain's ſtile aſked leave to ſpend the evening with her. She willingly conſented; and told me with her uſual kindneſs that there were to be a few friends with her, who would be equally pleaſed with an addition ſo agreeable to their party.

This is prudence with a witneſs, cried Mrs. Hindon, when I careleſsly informed her that I was engaged to ſup abroad, 'Tis all I ſuppoſe to avoid the poor Captain; but indeed, Miſs Seymour, when you have ſeen as much of the world as I have done, you'll have a little more indulgence for the frolics of twenty-five.

That I might run no chance of being caught by Farnford, I went early to Mrs. Weldon's: but indeed, my dear Sophia, I heartily regret I went at all.

The gueſts ſhe had mentioned, conſiſted of three gentlemen, who were extremely gay and exceſſively free in their manner. Their vivacity was indeed unbounded; and their behaviour ſo noiſy, not to ſay riotous, that I ſhould have imagined they could have inſpired only the moſt impenetrable gravity in any female companion.

panion. Inſtead of this, however, their mirth produced in Mrs. Weldon a flow of ſpirits ſo unreſtrained, that I could not avoid feeling to the laſt degree uncomfortable, and I would have given the world more than once for a pretence to have left the table.

I had not ſufficient courage however to betray ſo pointedly my diſapprobation; I therefore kept my ſeat, determining in my own mind to refuſe in future all Mrs. Weldon's invitations except to a *tete à tete*, when ſhe always appears in a point of view both amiable and reſpectable. But I took no part in the ſurrounding merriment, and very little in the converſation, although the gentlemen on each ſide addreſſed themſelves to me in a ſtyle of complimentary adoration perfectly new and almoſt incomprehenſible.

The moment the cloth was removed, I ordered a chair; reſolving not to wait for Mrs. Hindon's carriage, which was to attend me at a later hour; and told Mrs. Weldon that as that family were extremely regular, I ſhould be obliged to leave her ſooner than I wiſhed.

Indeed, cried the gentleman who ſat on my right hand, and who had been particularly violent in his expreſſions of admiration, we ſhall not permit you to be ſo cruel; and he ſeized my hand with an impetuoſity which terrified me.

It is not indeed in my power to ſtay, cried I, with no little reſentment in my voice. Mrs. Weldon joined earneſtly in entreating me not to break up the party: and the other gentlemen inſiſted ſo ſtrongly, that I was abſolutely conſtrained to ſit on, from the mere ſhame of diſcovering

diſcovering a degree of apprehenſion for I knew not what.

The gentlemen now began to ſing a number of drinking, or as they termed it *jovial* ſongs; many of which, if I might judge from the manner they were received, were by no means adapted for female ears; and the glaſs circulated ſo freely, that my ſituation every inſtant grew more diſagreeable. I was aſſailed on each ſide with the moſt extravagant flattery; and all my attempts to riſe were received with ſuch violent oppoſition, that I had not reſolution to undergo them, and therefore forced myſelf to remain till it was near twelve. I then got up, and declared I was determined to go.

There is but one way of putting a period to ſo barbarous a determination, cried one of the gentlemen, and ſpringing forward to the door, he turned the key, and put it with an air of gay triumph into his pocket.

My conſternation at this manœuvre was beyond conception, and I turned to Mrs. Weldon with a look of aſtoniſhment for which I could not find words. It was, you may conclude, not much abated from obſerving that inſtead of openly avowing her diſpleaſure, ſhe laughed extremely at my apparent diſtreſs. Come, my dear, cried ſhe, ſince you are kept priſoner, tis in vain to reſiſt. Let us all ſit down for an hour longer at leaſt, and Sir Edward will favour us with another ſong.

No, Madam, cried I much provoked, 'tis my intention to be gone, and go I will. I beg and entreat Sir, turning to the gentleman, you will open the door and allow me to be gone. I aſk it as a favour, Sir.

Why

Why then, Madam, cried he gayly, with the grant of another you ſhall purchaſe this favour with all my ſoul.

What muſt I do then? cried I.

Pay the door-keeper, Madam, advancing with an air of the moſt impertinent effrontery.

Nay that's but juſt by G— called out the others, burſting into a a loud laugh.

I was ſo confounded with this audacious behaviour, that I could not utter a ſyllable; but retiring to my ſeat, I turned ſuddenly ſick, and grew ſo pale that they all concluded I was going to faint.

Mrs. Weldon's mirth, on obſerving this change, was converted into apprehenſion. You have carried your wit greatly too far, Gentlemen, cried ſhe; and Sir Edward inſtantly procuring the key from the other, uttered a thouſand proteſtations of grief and regret for having given me a moment's uneaſineſs.

Mrs. Weldon then led me to her dreſſing room, from whence a ſervant was ordered to call a chair. She made me a thouſand apologies for having allowed me to be ſo ſeverely tormented; but concluded, ſhe ſaid, I would not mind the innocent frolic of a party of gay-hearted young men who were not quite ſober.

I do not think them proper company for either of us, Madam, in ſuch a ſituation, cried I, nor can I call a frolic innocent which was in my opinion to the laſt degree impudent to attempt and humiliating to receive.

I ſpoke with warmth, for indeed the party altogether had ſhocked and confounded me extremely.

Oh the pretty little prude, cried ſhe in a tone of ironical vivacity; indeed, my dear, you muſt

expect

expect on entering the world to behold a number of things which will appear equally ſtrange and unaccountable to you. Pray do you imagine that all men are as grave as your father, or as ſententious as Mr. Howard? Young men will be gay, and ſometimes forget themſelves. I diſapprove of any flagrant breach of propriety as much as you or any one elſe can do, but to be ſometimes abſurd gives a guſt to life.

The chair being now come, I bade her coldly adieu, and returned home extremely hurt to perceive the notions of a perſon, for whom I really feel an affection, ſo diſſimilar to my own, and grieved to find that her unfortunate ſpirit of coquetry obſcured and concealed a thouſand good qualities.

Adieu! my Sophia. My deſire to hear from you augments every hour. Your delightful journal, which uſed formerly to conſtitute my chief amuſement, will now prove my conſolation in all my troubles, as your friendſhip is my ſupport in every difficulty. The anxiety in which we muſt ſome time longer remain, wears out in ſome meaſure my ſpirits, though I do not allow myſelf to brood over vexations that have not actually arrived; on the contrary, I am beginning to prepare for the worſt, that is to ſay, for Lord Belmont's inflexibility, and often ſay to myſelf—if my family ſhould perſiſt in deſerting me, I ſtill poſſeſs my dear Fanny and my invaluable Sophia, and theſe two bleſſings, when put in the ſcale againſt all the comforts and advantages reſulting from being cordially received into the family of my grand father, deſirable as is that event, make them appear lighter than air. Adieu, my love.

H. SEYMOUR.

LET-

LETTER IX.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

JAN. 15.

YOUR kind packet was brought me this morning. A thouſand, thouſand thanks to my beloved Sophia, for the warm friendſhip and affection which breathes in every line. Such a friend, at all times an invaluable treaſure, is in our preſent ſituation if poſſible ſtill more unſpeakably precarious: for when we now look around us, there remains not one other perſon, Madame de Clarence excepted, to whom that tender appellation is due; and even ſhe is not a Sophia.

One part of your letter actually dyed my cheeks with bluſhes, although I read it in private. How can you rally me ſo unmercifully becauſe I deſcribed our fellow traveller to be what he really is—a very agreeable man. I did not tell you he was an Adonis, nor did I expreſs myſelf, if I recollect, in terms of greater warmth than the politeneſs of his attentions merited from me. That he is handſome, and uncommonly engaging in his manner, is no more than you yourſelf muſt have acknowledged had you alſo been of the party. I confeſs however I have been ſeveral times a little apprehenſive of your animadverſions upon different parts of my journal, though I did not imagine you would have taken ſuch *ſtrange* notions ſo *early* into your head.

If you have become already ſuſpicious, how much elated will you prove, and how vain of your ſagacity, when you receive the latter part of

of my journal, where you find I have again met with *my hero*, as you call him. I am conſcious I have laid myſelf ſtill more open to ridicule in ſome of my laſt packets than even when you took the hint with ſo much avidity from nothing.

I freely acknowledge, however, that the natural eagerneſs of my temper may have led me to expreſs myſelf with an energy which was perhaps abſurd enough; but I am accuſtomed, to *my* Sophia, *to think on paper*; I give every idea full latitude, and never once reflect how ridiculous I may often appear.

You command me, you ſay, on my *allegiance*, to confeſs faithfully if I do not find myſelf inclined to be a little more ſolicitous about this Oroondates than I ever was about the Chevalier de Mertane, or any other man? Indeed, my dear, this is by no means putting the matter to a fair trial; for to compare Mr. Roatſley with the Chevalier argues nothing in the world in favour of your opinion, the latter being determinedly diſagreeable to me; and there is a material difference I hope between acknowledging that a man is agreeable and being in love with him. That I think Mr. Roatſley the moſt agreeable man I have yet met with, I ſincerely confeſs; but I can think him ſo, and even indulge a wiſh for further intimacy, without concluding myſelf in the ſlighteſt danger.

I will confeſs to you, however, my ſweet friend, and let the openneſs of my heart put a final period to your raillery on this ſubject, that ſince the night of the play, when I think I muſt have given him cauſe for thinking meanly of me, I have ſuffered more uneaſineſs than ſuch a trifle ought to have occaſioned; and the recollection

collection that this change in his behaviour was antecedent to Farnford's appearance in the party, adds to my perplexity and encreaſes my regret.

As he appears to be intimate with Captain Bradſhaw, perhaps the latter has hinted ſuſpicions of my prudence, and thus overturned the favourable ſentiments which at Dover Roatſley ſeemed inclined to feel for his new acquaintances; yet his polite and attentive behaviour when I met with him at Drury-lane Theatre, entirely contradicts this idea, and was indeed totally different from the cold diſtance and civil reſerve with which his manner was impreſſed the laſt time I ſaw him at the theatre. He did not appear the ſame man, at leaſt he certainly was not actuated by the ſame feelings.

This confeſſion may lead you to ſuſpect the weakneſs of my heart, and I have ſeverely condemned myſelf for allowing the opinion of a ſtranger to influence me ſo far: yet I really believe pride alone is at the bottom of my uneaſineſs. I am hurt to have fallen in the eſteem of a man, who, in ſpite of your raillery, appears ſuperior to moſt of his ſex. I formed no wiſhes from his acquaintance, but that he might prove an agreeable acquiſition to our ſociety; therefore I could experience, I imagined, but a ſlight diſappointment. Yet I allow that I have permitted his behaviour to intereſt me too much; and ſince it has been ſo remarkable as to excite your obſervation even ſo early, I give you my word I will exert myſelf to think of it no more.

Were

JAN. 16.

Were it not for the uneaſy ſuſpenſe in which we muſt remain till Lord Belmont's reſolution is known, our reſidence here would not be ſo uncomfortable as I at firſt concluded it would prove. Mr. Hindon is a good natured man, and of a very ſociable diſpoſition. He keeps an hoſpitable table, to which he generally brings home two or three gueſts every day, and theſe he treats with eaſe and benevolence without oſtentation. They are not, to be ſure, men of very brilliant manners, or whoſe ſociety can be deemed extremely deſirable; being uſually friends from Change, about his own age; men who have ſpent their lives in the plodding purſuits of gain, to the acquiſition of which all their talents have been invariably exerted—I had almoſt ſaid *exhauſted*, for their converſation ſeldom diſplays either knowledge of arts or taſte for attainments that lead not to the great end of becoming rich. They claim, however, the merit of induſtry; and though ſometimes I am confounded with their vulgarity, in men paſſed the middle of life, one is leſs ſhocked with that roughneſs which proceeds from plain dealing than with the ſmart and forward attempts made by ſome of the beaux of this line to appear *degagè* men of the world againſt nature and education.

Mrs. Hindon, though far ſhort of my ſanguine expectations, is a well-meaning woman, and by no means deficient in ſeveral good qualities. Theſe are indeed often obſcured by the want of one which beſtows luſtre on every other, I mean *delicacy*. She would not willingly inflict a wound, if ſhe was conſcious of its poignancy; but ſhe is totally deſtitute of thoſe

thoſe feelings which tell when another's are hurt. Without being generous, ſhe does not fail in point of charity; I mean that branch of the duty that conſiſts in giving alms. She keeps excellent order in her family, piques herſelf upon being an active œconomiſt, goes ſeldom into public, and is not given to diſſipation. Our hours are early and regular, at leaſt when compared with thoſe which prevail in this country, and our evenings are generally ſpent at home, where now and then an eaſy friend joins the family party.

I have diſcovered one ſtriking feature in Mrs Hindon's character, to which perhaps may be attributed her unbounded civility to us. Yet I own it is unfair, to place her kindneſs in a light that deprives it of all merit. She was herſelf of very low extraction, and probably for that reaſon has attached an idea of importance to rank and family, which induces her to attend with the moſt ſedulous regard and reſpect to all who have the ſlighteſt claim to diſtinction. Since our abode here, I have ſuſpected a ſcheme, which repeated obſervation now convinces me, is not without foundation. Captain Wilmot, Mrs. Hindon's nephew, in a manner lives in her houſe; and except at the ſeaſons of ſleeping or dreſſing, makes conſtantly one of the family. He is become of late extremely particular in his attentions to Fanny, and continually entertains her in a ſort of half whiſper, which gives their converſation the air of a *tete à tete*. He is good-looking, though extremely vacant and inſipid; but having received the poliſh of a military education, is enabled to hold forth with eaſe and fluency in a complimentary ſtyle to which Fanny has no

ſort

ſort of averſion. I have been a good deal alarmed, leſt, as ſhe is young and completely inexperienced, *les petits ſoins de Monſieur le Capitaine*, ſhould prove more ſucceſsful than were to be wiſhed. I have not failed therefore, in talking of him in private, to throw a degree of ridicule upon his behaviour and appearance, of all weapons the moſt dangerous againſt which a lover can contend, and as Fanny is not extremely ſuſceptible, I think my plan will prove the deſtruction of Mrs. Hindon's; for that ſhe is at the bottom of the Captain's paſſion, and has beſtowed the proper ſupplies of fuel to blow it into a flame, I have no manner of doubt. Indeed her deſire of aggrandizing her family by an alliance with Lord Belmont's, might alone have induced her to promote a match between Fanny and her nephew; but I make no doubt that beſides this motive, to a young man who is not in affluent circumſtances, Fanny's ten thouſand pounds, added to the expectations which Mrs. Hindon often inſinuates we may juſtly form from our grand father's liberality, would be an addition extremely deſirable. After all, he may be ſincerely enamoured, for Fanny poſſeſſes charms capable of intereſting more refined ſentiments than I ſuſpect the Captain to poſſeſs; yet I recollect we were ſome time here before he ſeemed to know ſhe was even in the ſame room with him, and his ſolicitude took its riſe all of a ſudden, without any apparent cauſe for the alteration, after an appearance of the moſt frigid indifference.

My ſuſpicions that the ſcheme was firſt ſuggeſted to him by his aunt, have been confirmed from remarking that Mrs, Hindon takes every opportunity of laviſhing the moſt exaggerated encomiums

encomiums on her nephew. He is the very beſt young man in the world; given to no vice; always kept himſelf out of the mad frolics of his military companions: and ſo good a ſon, that ſhe made no doubt he would make a figure equally reſpectable in every other department of life.

Beſides, don't you think him extremely handſome, Miſs Fanny? I'm ſure if you had been within hearing of what he ſaid of you laſt night, you muſt have been flattered, though there was not one word of flattery in the caſe. He declared you was in his opinion—you muſt excuſe me, Miſs Seymour—by far the handſomeſt of the two, and ſo amiable, and ſo elegant, and ſo like a young lady of the firſt quality. However I give you my word, Miſs Seymour, he allows you to be what all the world muſt acknowledge—compleatly lovely; but Miſs Fanny, he ſays, is an angel, and I think he is fairly caught at laſt.

You ſee, my dear, by this little trait, that Mrs. Hindon, with all her errors, is not in the leaſt artful. Indeed I believe this plan no ſooner occurred to herſelf, than, though without intending it, ſhe contrived to communicate it to me. She is indeed incapable even of a prudent concealment; and when ſhe imagines her deſigns (for ſhe has a very active turn of mind) are cunningly hidden from every eye, a ſlight degree of penetration only is required to pierce through the thin diſguiſe. She does not ſpare flattery you may perceive on this occaſion; and as ſhe knows the influence which two years ſeniority, added to the warmeſt attachment, have given me over Fanny's mind, you ſee I get

get my ſhare of it, as a perſon whom it is neceſſary to bring over to her intereſt.

I think Mr. Howard has likewiſe made a diſcovery of the ſcheme, which evidently meets with his diſapprobation; for he always appears chagrined and diſpleaſed when Wilmot joins us, and regards him with a ſcrutinizing eye, when he whiſpers ſoft nonſenſe into Fanny's ear.

Indeed to a mind like his, ſo fraught with rectitude and good ſenſe, the utter impropriety of ſuch a ſtep muſt appear in full force; and I make no doubt that conſidering himſelf at preſent in the light of our guardian, he holds himſelf reſponſible to Lord Belmont for our conduct. While under his immediate, his ſole direction, were this affair to involve Fanny in a marriage ſo imprudent, it muſt reflect extremely even on Mr. Howard's character; ſince from his connection with Wilmot, it would undoubtedly appear to Lord Belmont as having received his ſecret concurrence and approbation.

Of ſuch a conduct, I am convinced Mr. Howard is incapable, even were he to draw from the event the moſt deſirable conſequencee to himſelf: but independent of this idea, I am miſtaken if a more forcible motive does not give additional weight to the repugnance with which he beholds Wilmot's aſſiduities.

I believe I once hinted to you, that Mr. Howard, during the infancy of our acquaintance, was extremely particular in his attentions to me. He was ever ſolicitous for my company, and ſought my converſation with eagerneſs and ſedulity. His behaviour at length alarmed me, and mine plainly told him how unſucceſsful any application beyond the limits of friendſhip would

would prove; for though I eſteem, I admire his merits, and there is none of his ſex for whoſe character I have a higher reſpect; though his manners beſpeak his mind, and convey the mild benevolence of his nature into every look and motion; and though his years would not have been with me a material objection, yet, yet, Sophia, I could not have loved him. You will call me romantic perhaps; but never could Mr. Howard have enjoyed that tender intereſt in my heart which my lover muſt poſſeſs ere he becomes my huſband. My ſentiments partake of thoſe a daughter feels for her parent. They are thoſe of confidence, dependence, and gratitude; but they are far removed from thoſe ſoft, cordial, and inſinuating ties which make the duties of a wife her firſt happineſs, and enable her almoſt to exiſt but for the man to whom ſhe has given her hand.

When Fanny returned from the convent, (for it was during her abode there that our acquaintance with Mr. Howard commenced) he was ſtruck with her appearance: but he regarded her as a beautiful child, and was more delighted with her *naiveté* than her converſation; and though he often entered into chat, he never diſcourſed with her: till our misfortune in loſing our dear parent, by throwing us entirely under his care, made him feel Fanny's dependence, which at the period of my illneſs reſted ſolely on him, as a peculiar charm that ſeemed to ſoften and affect him.

While we travelled, ſhe leant on him for ſupport in every difficulty or alarm. To him every enquiry was made, and from him every explanation was expected; and there are few men, I believe, in whom the idea of protection,

get my ſhare of it, as a perſon whom it is neceſſary to bring over to her intereſt.

I think Mr. Howard has likewiſe made a diſcovery of the ſcheme, which evidently meets with his diſapprobation; for he always appears chagrined and diſpleaſed when Wilmot joins us, and regards him with a ſcrutinizing eye, when he whiſpers ſoft nonſenſe into Fanny's ear.

Indeed to a mind like his, ſo fraught with rectitude and good ſenſe, the utter impropriety of ſuch a ſtep muſt appear in full force; and I make no doubt that conſidering himſelf at preſent in the light of our guardian, he holds himſelf reſponſible to Lord Belmont for our conduct. While under his immediate, his ſole direction, were this affair to involve Fanny in a marriage ſo imprudent, it muſt reflect extremely even on Mr. Howard's character; ſince from his connection with Wilmot, it would undoubtedly appear to Lord Belmont as having received his ſecret concurrence and approbation.

Of ſuch a conduct, I am convinced Mr. Howard is incapable, even were he to draw from the event the moſt deſirable conſequencee to himſelf: but independent of this idea, I am miſtaken if a more forcible motive does not give additional weight to the repugnance with which he beholds Wilmot's aſſiduities.

I believe I once hinted to you, that Mr. Howard, during the infancy of our acquaintance, was extremely particular in his attentions to me. He was ever ſolicitous for my company, and ſought my converſation with eagerneſs and ſedulity. His behaviour at length alarmed me, and mine plainly told him how unſucceſsful any application beyond the limits of friendſhip would

would prove; for though I eſteem, I admire his merits, and there is none of his ſex for whoſe character I have a higher reſpect; though his manners beſpeak his mind, and convey the mild benevolence of his nature into every look and motion; and though his years would not have been with me a material objection, yet, yet, Sophia, I could not have loved him. You will call me romantic perhaps; but never could Mr. Howard have enjoyed that tender intereſt in my heart which my lover muſt poſſeſs ere he becomes my huſband. My ſentiments partake of thoſe a daughter feels for her parent. They are thoſe of confidence, dependence, and gratitude; but they are far removed from thoſe ſoft, cordial, and inſinuating ties which make the duties of a wife her firſt happineſs, and enable her almoſt to exiſt but for the man to whom ſhe has given her hand.

When Fanny returned from the convent, (for it was during her abode there that our acquaintance with Mr. Howard commenced) he was ſtruck with her appearance: but he regarded her as a beautiful child, and was more delighted with her *naiveté* than her converſation; and though he often entered into chat, he never diſcourſed with her: till our misfortune in loſing our dear parent, by throwing us entirely under his care, made him feel Fanny's dependence, which at the period of my illneſs reſted ſolely on him, as a peculiar charm that ſeemed to ſoften and affect him.

While we travelled, ſhe leant on him for ſupport in every difficulty or alarm. To him every enquiry was made, and from him every explanation was expected; and there are few men, I believe, in whom the idea of protection,

exerted towards a young and pleaſing object, will not create a tender intereſt, which if it is not love, partakes extremely of the ſame ſentiment.

As for me, my ſpirits oppreſſed and my temper independent, I truſted a little more to myſelf, nor conſulted Mr. Howard but when circumſtances called for counſel and aſſiſtance. To me therefore he ever behaves with reſpect and the moſt flattering regard; but to Fanny, his addreſs has ſtill more ſoftneſs; he appears as if he conſidered her peculiarly his charge, and to gratify her in any little wiſh, however whimſical, evidently confers pleaſure on himſelf.

Yet if my ſuſpicions of his ſecret partiality are founded on truth, (for I will not pretend to be certain whether my ſurmiſes are not partly the chimeras of my own imagination) he is acting on this occaſion like a man of honour, and as I ſhould have expected from his character. His attentions are thoſe which may be felt, but except by myſelf I am certain never have been remarked; nor has he once betrayed a wiſh to inſinuate himſelf into her good graces. No doubt he is conſcious that a man of moderate fortune cannot be conſidered by Lord Belmont as a match for his grand child; who, if he means to acknowledge her, muſt poſſeſs a variety of advantages, according to the world's opinion, ſufficient to carry a grandfather's views infinitely higher; neither is he inſenſible, I dare ſay, to the inequality of their years.

A girl of ſixteen, with all the thoughtleſſneſs incident to her time of life, encreaſed perhaps by the retirement of her education, cannot appear to ſober reaſon an eligible choice for a

grave, ſedate, man of forty three, whoſe proſpects of happineſs have probably been centered in expecting an amiable companion rather than a beloved miſtreſs, in the woman whom he makes the partner of his life. Yet probably thoſe very men, Sophia, may not prove leſs liable than others to be caught by the charms of youth; and when that is the caſe, partiality no doubt perſuades them they have diſcovered the miſtreſs and companion in one, and that they may be able to mould a young and innocent mind as they pleaſe.

I am miſtaken if Mr. Howard's imagination has not ſometimes ſecretly ſuggeſted ſome ſuch ideas; though further than concealed wiſhes, I am confident they never will proceed.

LETTER X.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

JANUARY 20.

THIS interval of ſome days has produced occurrences of the moſt diſtreſſing nature. Oh! my Sophia, why was I ever prevailed on to quit our quiet retreat in Languedoc? why has fate condemned me to viſit a country, where, ſince the moment of my arrival, I have encountered only diſappointments, againſt which I muſt ſtruggle, and difficulties with which I muſt contend.

Yeſterday morning Mrs. Hindon propoſed carrying us to the ſale of a nobleman's furniture and effects, who had lately ruined himſelf

by extravagance and a fatal paſſion for play. Curioſity, ſhe told us, had brought the whole town together on this occaſion: numbers, who never thought of becoming purchaſers flocking to the auction to behold the ſplendor and elegance of the articles expoſed to view.

This not being an amuſement for which I imagined I ſhould have much reliſh, I declined being of the party; and ſoon after Fanny and ſhe was gone, Mrs. Weldon called. She was ſo extremely agreeable, and made ſo many apologies for the behaviour of herſelf and company the evening I ſpent at her houſe, that I could not help cordially forgiving, though in my heart I could not thoroughly excuſe her.

You muſt conſider, my dear, ſaid ſhe, that your ideas and mine on certain points cannot fail to be extremely oppoſite. You have been educated in abſolute ſolitude, and muſt have taken your opinions either from reading, which is a very erroneous guide to form your ſentiments upon, and one that ever leads to narrow prejudices and contracted notions, or have imbibed your rules of manners from the converſation of your father, who lived in the laſt age, at leaſt in times that did not allow of thoſe freedoms that the preſent fully authorize. As for me, beſides the ſanction which matrimony at a very early period of life gave to the natural gaiety of my temper, I have ſeen a good deal of the world; my character therefore is eſtabliſhed. I fear not the voice of cenſure; and thoſe gentlemen whoſe mirth offended you ſo much, were men I have long known; two of them were my relations; and you muſt allow that in the midſt of their life and ſpirit no real impropriety was thought of.

Though

Though I did not exactly agree in this opinion, I allowed it to paſs without endeavouring to confute it; and after ſitting an hour, during which Mrs. Weldon converſed ſo rationally and agreeably that ſhe made me entirely forget my reſentment, ſhe took leave, being engaged ſhe ſaid with her lawyers at a certain hour; having firſt made me promiſe to dine with her two days hence, when ſhe aſſured me there ſhould be no company except a female relation, with whom ſhe was certain I ſhould be much pleaſed.

As Mrs. Weldon's company is at all times really delightful, for ſhe poſſeſſes the art of rendering the moſt trifling occurrences intereſting from the inſinuating gaiety with which ſhe relates them, I conſented; having firſt confeſſed that I hoped none of the gentlemen of her laſt party would join us. If any of them call, cried ſhe laughing, I promiſe you I ſhall give orders to be denied, ſince the pretty little prude will have it ſo.

After ſhe was gone, having a little time to myſelf, which is not often the caſe, I recollected that I had ſome trifling buſineſs to tranſact with Mrs. Brumpton, my late landlady, relating to part of our baggage, which ſtill remained at her houſe; and as I wiſhed to make Mrs. Hindon a trifling preſent of a very pretty work box which was packed in one of the trunks under Mrs. Brumpton's care, I ſent Dubois acroſs the ſquare, for it is not much further, to aſk if ſhe was at home, and to let her know I ſhould call ſome time that morning to ſpeak with her; and half an hour after I ordered my chair and went.

The

The maid conducted me into a ſmall parlour, ſaying indiſpenſable buſineſs had carried her miſtreſs out for a few moments, but that ſhe had left orders if I came to beg the favour of me to wait her return. I confeſs I thought this rather a freedom in the woman; however I ſat down, expecting ſhe would ſoon appear.

My attention was in a ſhort time rouſed by hearing a gentleman give orders to his ſervant, ſo near, that I found only a thin partition ſeparated the room in which I was placed from that occupied by our late fellow lodger, Captain Bradſhaw. He appeared employed in aſſiſting the packing of ſome guns, and other ſhooting implements, about which he ſeemed as anxiouſly careful as if his life had depended on their arriving undamaged at the end of their deſtined journey. He was extremely buſy, and whiſtled with great vociferation ſeveral little cotillion tunes at preſent in vogue.

Some time after I heard the door of his apartment open, and a gentleman enter.—Well Tom, cried a voice which I inſtantly knew to be Mr. Roatſley's, you are preparing to be gone I find.

Yes, I am ſending off all my ſhooting apparatus, in hopes that ſince I muſt go I may find ſome amuſement in making havock among the partridges. I am told there is excellent ſport on Sir Edward's grounds; and I may as well take ten days of it as not.

There is a vaſt quantity of game about that part of the country, anſwered Mr. Roatſley. Perhaps I may take it into my head to pay you a viſit at your quarters, after my election buſineſs is concluded.

I wiſh to God you would. But for my own par

part the devil take me if any thing under heaven ſhould drive me from town at this ſeaſon, while I had a full purſe, and leave from the regiment to ſpend it where I pleaſed.

Heaven knows what my feelings by that time may be, ſaid the other, but at preſent I find myſelf equally incapable of reliſhing the pleaſures of the town or the amuſements of the country.

Yes you are fairly caught at laſt, cried Bradſhaw, laughing heartily: Cupid has revenged himſelf with a vengeance; and you know I always told you he would one day prove doubly ſevere. She is divinely handſome it muſt be confeſſed, and I believe the little god never aimed his darts from brighter eyes than thoſe of your Dulcinea. They would alone conſtitute a beauty without the aſſiſtance of any other perfect feature.

There is at leaſt, replied his friend, a character—an expreſſion—a ſomething about her altogether that intereſts me beyond what any other woman was ever capable of effecting.

A character! replied the other redoubling his mirth. But indeed we have always been told that love is blind.

Think, my deareſt Sophia, if your ſuſpicions had any real foundation, and much I fear there was more cauſe in your raillery than I ever dreaded, think what I felt at this inſtant. From the time of Roatſley's entering, I had ſuffered agitation unſpeakable, and had liſtened with eager anxiety to this diſcourſe; but at the laſt ſentence my heart beat with augmented violence, and I waited with inexpreſſible patience to learn the name of that happy woman whom at this painful moment I ſcrupled not to confeſs I envied.

vied. Breathleſs with expectation, I heard Mr. Roatſley after a ſhort pauſe reply—Well, Bradſhaw, in ſpite of appearances, which I acknowledge are by no means in her favour, I cannot for my ſoul think of her for an inſtant in a diſreſpectful point of view. When I reflect on her behaviour during the ſhort period of our acquaintance, it ſeemed to evince a ſuperior turn of mind; far from giving way to her fears in a ſtorm which might juſtly have excuſed the moſt immoderate and well grounded apprehenſions, ſhe exerted herſelf in the moſt amiable manner to calm and allay the weaker terrors of her ſiſter, who ſunk under her alarm; inceſſantly endeavouring to inſpire that hope and conſolation which ſhe herſelf equally required at a moment ſo tremendous. Struck with her uncommon beauty, I took advantage of her ſituation to offer her thoſe little attentions which any woman in ſimilar circumſtances would have claimed from me, but which in performing to this unknown fair, gratified me beyond expreſſion. Her fears, ſo unaffected, ſo ſevere, yet ſo little indulged, rendered her at once the object of my admiration and tendereſt compaſſion. There were a thouſand charms in every word, in every look; and a certain ſlight degree of a foreign accent, which in another might have appeared a defect, gave a peculiar ſoftneſs to the tone of her voice, the force of which I felt without being able to define it.

The alarming ſituation in which I beheld her gave birth to a thouſand circumſtances that all conſpired to delight and intereſt me. Nor did the evening I ſpent in her company at Dover, fail to heighten and augment my firſt impreſſions in her favour. Her manner poſſeſſed a poliſhed

liſhed ſimplicity, and her converſation a refined good ſenſe, which diffuſed a mutual luſtre on each other, and which inſinuated her into my heart beyond all power of reſiſtance: and although I was obliged to get to the Abbey by the day I had mentioned to my mother, and had hardly time ſufficient to fulfil my promiſe, yet I allowed many hours to elapſe before I could prevail with myſelf to quit the inn where the lovely Miſs Seymour was.

Is it then *me* at laſt—*me* indeed—cried I to myſelf, out of breath, with expectation, and wholly exhauſted with agitation.

During the preceding ſpeech, it is not eaſy to deſcribe what were my perturbations. At one time elated with hopes, which at another ſunk into apprehenſions, I feared to flatter myſelf deluſively; nor till I heard my name diſtinctly pronounced could I be perſuaded that the woman he had been deſcribing with all the exaggerated encomiums of an impaſſioned heart, could indeed be myſelf.

The ſenſations of pleaſure which ruſhed into my mind, were ſoon however mixed with a bitterneſs that poiſoned every riſing ſatisfaction.

When I call to mind her behaviour, continued he, both during that evening and every ſucceeding one when I have been ſo fortunate as to converſe with her; when I recollect her manner, ſo ſoft, ſo unaffected, ſo inexpreſſibly engaging, how is it poſſible to reconcile all this with the account which the woman here gives of the whole party? I cannot recollect one inſtance of the ſlighteſt appearance of levity either in Miſs Seymour or her ſiſter, who is the very picture of innocence itſelf, nor would it have been in the power of any perſon on earth to

have made me for one inſtant give credit to the aſperſion on her character, had not my eyes witneſſed that ſhe can forgive an inſult which a delicate woman never could have pardoned.

After all, ſaid Captain Bradſhaw, Mrs. Brumpton does not abſolutely aver that they are abandoned girls, though it muſt be owned ſhe ſeems to inſinuate more than ſhe chuſes to divulge; and laſt night when I queſtioned her again according to your deſire, ſhe told me that when under the eye of their Argus, no girls can behave with greater propriety, but that the inſtant his back is turned they do not appear the ſame creatures.

What I at this moment heard affected me ſo violently that I became incapable for ſome minutes of attending to what they ſaid; on renewing my attention I found Roatſley was ſpeaking.

You may conclude then, ſaid he, how ſhocked I muſt be to learn that there were a variety of rumours to the diſadvantage of this family, with which I was ſo much charmed. I was indeed inexpreſſibly hurt to find any mortal dared to think diſreſpectfully of any one of them; yet I diſbelieved every ſyllable that was uttered. I could not diſcredit the evidence of my eyes, which traced every amiable quality and every ſentiment of female dignity in the countenance and manner of Miſs Seymour. As for her ſiſter, ſhe is alſo very lovely, and the innocent youthfulneſs of her appearance accords ill with your report. Mr. Howard I enquired after; and find he is eſteemed a man of ſenſe and character, neither given to vice nor even accuſed of exceſs: I muſt therefore repeat, that I think the notion of their being his wards is infinitely more

probable

probable (even ſetting aſide the appearance of the ladies, which indeed renders any other opinion abſolutely impoſſible,) than that there ſhould be any illicit connection in the caſe. That part of the ſtory I am therefore thoroughly convinced is an infamous ſlander.

Wounded to the ſoul by this dreadful, this inconceivable explanation of the motives of Mr. Roatſley's late behaviour, oh! Sophia, what were my pangs, what was my mortification, during a recital which ſunk my ſpirits from the higheſt elevation to the loweſt deſpondency! Scarce could I keep myſelf from fainting at the cruel and painful concluſion of encomiums which had excited ſuch infinite pride and pleaſure. My heart died within me; yet I anxiouſly liſtened to what ſhould follow, while my eyes were drowned in tears of vexation and regret.

The girl may be thoughtleſs and inconſiderate, returned Bradſhaw, without being abſolutely void of delicacy; and their being with Lady Farnford certainly argues in favou of their reputation. The idea of their being French courtezans is not by any means probable: but ſhould they turn out ſo you have ſtill leſs reaſon to ſigh, Roatſley, for your fair one will not prove cruel.

It is utterly impoſſible! cried Roatſley with warmth. I am perfectly convinced of the abominable falſhood of that inſinuation. Miſs Seymour may be weak, vain, and volatile, (tho' even in theſe points I am unconvinced,) for I will not pretend to aver that firſt ſight impreſſions, eſpecially where an intereſting figure is in queſtion, are always to be taken as proof; but to attack her moral character is an aſperſion

which

which one look muſt compleatly and ſufficiently confute. I own I am hurt and confounded at the variety of reports which pour in upon me, from more quarters than one: they have even reached the ears of my mother, though ſhe never ſaw either of them in her life, nor could have heard even their names repeated till within theſe few days. Miſs Seymour has fallen I acknowledge from the high ideas I had conceived of her character, but never for an inſtant can I do her ſo material an injury as to ſuſpect her reputation.

There are men, ſaid Mr. Bradſhaw, who in your ſituation would not regret if that point continued doubtful.

No, cried his friend, the woman who has once poſſeſſed the power of inſpiring me with a paſſion almoſt equally compounded of tenderneſs and eſteem, cannot preſerve the firſt while ſhe loſes all claim to the latter. My love for Miſs Seymour could not ſubſiſt independent of that delicacy which gives it a charm refined and inexpreſſible; nor would I enjoy if I might the fruits of a fall which I ſhould ever lament. But I am conſcious I am injuring her in mentioning her name under ſuch a ſurmiſe. Pray what ſays your watch? This ſubject carries me too far; and I have an engagement at four.

'Tis almoſt that hour, cried the other; and both the gentlemen roſe to go.

I trembled from head to foot as they paſſed the door of the parlour, leſt any accident ſhould have diſcovered me; but I was ſoon rid of my fears, as they left the houſe directly.

What do you think, my dear Sophia, of this converſation, ſo wholly inconceivable? Scarce have I preſerved reſolution and patience ſufficient

ent for relating it minutely, without often interrupting my narration by the ſilent ejaculations and the different emotions to which at the time it gave riſe. To delineate my various feelings of mortification, diſdain and vexation, would be perfectly impoſſible. I think however you may in ſome meaſure ſuggeſt to yourſelf what they muſt have been. Terror was no inconſiderable ingredient towards rendering the ſituation of my mind ſtill more dreadful; and what motive Mrs. Brumpton could poſſibly have had for repreſenting us to others in a light in which I am certain ſhe never could herſelf have regarded us, plunged me into conſternation and affright.

The inſtant Mr. Roatſley and his friend were out of the houſe, I determined to fly from a ſpot in which I dreaded one moment longer to remain; and was haſtening to the door, when it ſuddenly opened, and Mrs. Brumpton appeared, quite out of breath, followed by—the wretch Farnford.

Ten thouſand pardons, Madam, cried ſhe, for the trouble you have had in waiting. A poor ſick relation ſent to intreat I would give her the conſolation of one half hour's converſation, having ſome affairs to impart which lay heavy on her mind, and thinking as you mentioned two o'clock that you would not be here for ſome time, I ventured to give my poor dying couſin the comfort ſhe ſo much required.

While ſhe pronounced theſe words, in a whining hypocritical tone, Farnford advanced, and making me a profound bow, endeavoured to convey a look of contrition and reverence into his countenance, as if he concluded it muſt at once mollify and ſubdue my reſentment: but

I entirely

I entirely diſregarded his ſalutation. The ſight of him ſo unexpectedly threw me into the utmoſt terror, and a crowd of confuſed apprehenſions ruſhed inſtantly on my mind. I exerted myſelf however to aſſume an appearance of unconcerned indifference.

I am ſorry, Madam, ſaid I, with an air of gravity and compoſure under which I ſtrove to conceal the fears which almoſt overpowered me, that you ſhould have been ſo unluckily from home, as I have an indiſpenſable engagement that prevents my remaining a moment longer. I ſhall ſettle matters at a more convenient time; at preſent it is impoſſible; and I walked compoſedly towards the door, which ſhe had ſhut.

The woman ſeemed at a loſs, and ſtammered out—'Tis really extremely unlucky indeed, Ma'am: but if you could juſt ſit down a little bit, Ma'am—perhaps you might find time to give me directions about that large trunk, Ma'am—which has remained in my back room ever ſince you quitted it. Would you chooſe that it ſhould remain in my cuſtody, where it is very ſafe, or ſhall it be ſent to Mrs. Hindon's in the Square, Ma'am?

All this time ſhe kept her hand on the lock of the door, as if ſhe intended me the civility of opening it, but evidently with the deſign of detaining me. This movement redoubled my emotions; yet I anſwered as coolly as poſſible, Let it be ſent to Mrs. Hindon's, Madam; but I am in extreme haſte, and beg I may not be detained.

For heaven's ſake, cried Farnford, who all this while ſtood in evident embarraſſment, his eyes fixed with a moſt impudent ſtare on my face—Spare a few moments I beſeech you from

your

your engagement, and permit an unhappy man, who has undeſignedly and unfortunately offended you, to plead his cauſe at your feet; and falling on his knees, he ſeized my hand, which all my endeavours could not wreſt from him. But indeed I was too much intimidated to dare to make much reſiſtance; for the woman ſtill held the door; and though conſcious that I was in fact a priſoner, I was anxious to keep meaſures with them as poſſible, which I imagined might preſerve me from indignity.

Only hear me for one moment, continued he, and you will be conſcious that you have no juſt cauſe for offence. The firſt glance I had of ſuch ſuperlative charms, compleated the conqueſt of my heart: a heart, which has long remained unmoved, unſubdued, by the attractions of the moſt amiable and moſt accompliſhed of your ſex——

Sir, cried I, interrupting him with a reſolution which pride and reſentment inſpired, it is perfectly immaterial to me what are your ſentiments. I am not at leiſure at preſent to liſten to your diſcourſe, and I deſire you would inſtantly releaſe me.

The whole world and all the powers it contains, cried he with frightful vehemence, ſhall not tear you from me till you have heard me out. I own I did you injuſtice. I heartily deplore it. What can I ſay more? What can I do more to teſtify to you the ſincerity of my regret and repentance? Undoubtedly the moſt confounded prudery can alone induce you ſo violently to reſent a freedom of behaviour into which intoxication and a falſe idea of your character inadvertently led me. The moment I diſcovered my error I ſhould have flown to have acknowledged

knowledged and renounced it at your feet, but you have conſtantly fruſtrated all my attempts to obtain an interview. I am therefore conſtrained to make the moſt of fortune, and ſince ſhe has at length propitiouſly favoured my wiſhes, how can you imagine I will not take advantage of her gifts? Angelic creature, continued he, for heaven's ſake hear me with ſome degree of ſoftneſs and pity. I adore you: I would with delight undergo the ſevereſt torments to gain the ſlighteſt hopes of forgiveneſs. Tell me only that you will forget a conduct which I heartily lament—tell me that you will admit of my viſits at Mrs. Hindon's, where all the family are favourably diſpoſed towards me—and I will torture my own ſoul by permitting you to leave me.

I will not grant a permiſſion, cried I with ſpirit, which would lead to a perſecution I never will undergo and to hopes I never will encourage. You vainly flatter yourſelf, Sir, if you imagine you will even extort ſuch a conſent. I deſire you will allow me to go. I inſiſt upon it. What title have you to preſume to detain me againſt my inclination? (and I ſpoke with undiſſembled heat) you will oblige me to call up my footman for aſſiſtance.

He is not within call, I give you my word, ſo *that* is a reſource to which you cannot apply.

Pray, Mrs. Brumpton, cried I to the wicked woman, do you allow of ſuch violence being practiſed in your houſe?

All the Captain aſks is forgiveneſs, Madam, replied ſhe. Were he to attempt any incivility, I ſhould be the firſt to condemn him. I never have countenanced ſuch proceedings in my houſe

houſe I aſſure you, Ma'am; but all the gentleman aſks is to be allowed to hope.

All I wiſh by G—, interrupted he, all I kneel for is, that you would forget what has diſpleaſed you in my conduct, and by admitting my viſits, flatter me with the hope that time and aſſiduity may ſoften that dear, that inflexible heart in my favour.

Never, never, cried I with firmneſs.

Never! Madam, anſwered he, ſuddenly throwing aſide that appearance of humility and reſpect which notwithſtanding his violence he had hitherto preſerved, and aſſuming a look that terrified me—Do you perſiſt in this determination? do you tell me *never* to hope for pardon, Madam? Since then I find I gain no ground by ſubmiſſion, ſince you continue thus reſolute and unmoved to all my entreaties, ſince all my proteſtations only feed a pride, ſtern and unrelenting, permit me to aſſure you, that if you do not condeſcend to grant me ſome chance for future favour, moſt certainly I ſhall not prove ſo much my own enemy as—as to allow you to leave me, ſaid he heſitating—without obtaining it.

What do you aſk, ſaid I, almoſt ſinking with terror from the alarming warmth with which he uttered theſe words, and from the wildneſs of his looks, while he not only graſped my hand but kiſſed it ſeveral times in a paſſionate manner.

I only deſire, replied he, that you will never mention to any perſon whatever this interview, that you will endeavour to forget I ever offended you, and that you will deign to allow of my viſits, nor ſcrupulouſly avoid my ſight, under thoſe falſe pretences of engagements and indiſpoſition

on which have hitherto baffled all my attempts to meet with you.

Well, Sir, cried I, for my courage had now entirely failed me, ſince you can ſtoop to accept of an extorted compliance, I will ſee you at Mrs. Hindon's when you occaſionally call; but I ſhall certainly keep my own apartment, and follow my own engagements when I ſee proper; nor ſhall I ever give my conſent to conceal any part of your behaviour from thoſe to whom I may chooſe to divulge it, but you may conclude I ſhall not be eager to expoſe it on my own account.

At leaſt promiſe me, ſaid he, promiſe me, lovelieſt of human beings! that you will not publiſh this day's interview either to my mother, to Mrs. Hindon, or to Mr. Howard; on this condition, and this only will I ſuffer my charming priſoner to depart.

You ought to bluſh, Sir, to call me by that name; but ſince you are determined, to theſe theſe three exceptions I ſhall unwillingly ſubmit. Do not imagine, however, that you have it in your power to intimidate me to grant greater conceſſions; for here I ſolemnly proteſt that nothing ſhall induce me to go further; nor would a generous mind be capable of frightening me into promiſes which may be above my ability to perform.

No, cried he, I aſk no more. I build my future hopes on the opportunities I ſhall enjoy of pleading my cauſe when you are leſs diſturbed; and I hope you will allow ſomething for the generoſity of my preſent behaviour when you are entirely in my power.

Wretch! where was the generoſity he boaſted of?

of? to intimidate—to terrify me, and to force me into every meaſure he dared wiſh to adopt.

Then let me depart, cried I, for he ſtill held my hand.

Madam, ſaid the woman, may I take the liberty of adding one word? As the part I have acted in this matter was out of pure good will to the Captain, I hope you will not miſinterpret my permitting this meeting, which the young gentleman has ſolicited times without number before I could be brought to conſent to it.

No more conditions, ſaid I, with a haughty air; and after Farnford's odious lips had dwelt almoſt a minute on my hand, he led me to my chair, which ſtill remained in waiting, though he had uſed the precaution to ſend away Dubois, as if with orders from me to return home.

Do you not think, my Sophia, that during this morning I had ſuffered anguiſh and mortifications ſufficient: ah, no, my dear! a more cruel, a more ſevere pang than any I had endured yet remained, and wholly overpowered me: at that painful moment when the horrid Farnford was putting me into my chair at the bottom of the ſtairs, Mr. Roatſley paſſed me. I involuntarily ſtarted on perceiving him, and he ſuddenly changed colour; but without deigning to pay me the uſual compliments, he contented himſelf with ſlightly touching his hat, and with a careleſs but dejected air haſtily paſſing me, walked on.

I followed him with my eyes, and obſerved he looked behind; though inſtantly on ſeeing that I remarked it, he turned away, and I thought I could diſtinguiſh an appearance of chagrin on his countenance that made me regard the audacious Farnford (who juſt at that inſtant

inſtant bade me farewell) with augmented horror and diſguſt.

Oh heavens! ſaid I to myſelf, as the chair moved along, what has this morning revealed to me! That I'm loved by Roatſley, yet am the object of his contempt. If ſome hours ago he ſeemed inclined to think even better of me than I appeared to deſerve, now—now—every unfavourable ſuſpicion muſt have received full confirmation; and the vexation of my heart drew tears of bitterneſs from my eyes. Happily I got unobſerved into my own apartment, where Fanny immediately joined me; and I found ſome ſmall alleviation to my diſtreſs in relating to her all that variety of ſingular occurrences which had befallen me in the courſe of a few hours; but a call to dinner ſoon obliged me to dry my eyes, and appear with diſſembled eaſe at table, where there were, as uſual, two or three friends beſides the family.

JAN. 21.

Fatigued with writing, I laid down my pen to reflect on the tranſactions of a day, which, were I to live a thouſand years, I ſhall ever remember with pain. Oh! Sophia! have I not cauſe to be wounded to the ſoul? The man on earth who appears the moſt amiable in my eyes, has conceived perhaps an equal partiality for me; yet a falſe and injurious ſuſpicion muſt ſoon, nay muſt already, have entirely obliterated and deſtroyed every favourable prepoſſeſſion, and ſubſtituted in their room the loweſt and moſt contemptuous ſentiments. Have I not indeed cauſe to be hurt in the tendereſt part? No me-

thod

thod can I deviſe for clearing my reputation in Mr. Roatſley's opinion. I am under a fatal promiſe to conceal the whole affair from Mr. Howard, who is the only perſon that could have explained with delicacy and propriety any doubts that were to my diſadvantage, and I have little hopes Roatſley will henceforth feel the ſlighteſt ſolicitude about me, after the flagrant proof he has this day beheld of my deficiency in that point on which he juſtly reſts an importance ſo material. How can I now flatter myſelf, even ſhould I meet him in public, which is my ſole chance of encountering him, that he will give me an opportunity, by converſing with him, to teſtify how ſincerely my ſoul abhors the wretch whoſe conduct merits my ſcorn and deteſtation, and that my mind is far, far above thoſe vile and unaccountable ſuſpicions which he has been led, heaven knows how, to entertain againſt me.

But how on earth, my dear, have reports ſo infamous, ſo inconceivable been circulated at our expence? who could have any intereſt in propagating them, and who could have been ſo infernally wicked as to invent ſuch injurious falſhoods, without ſome ſtrong and powerful motive? Is it then poſſible to create ſecret and treacherous enemies, without performing or wiſhing ill to any one? The wretch Brumpton, you may perceive is not alone at the bottom of theſe mortifying aſperſions; from various quarters it ſeems they have reached Mr. Roatſley's ears; even from the lips of his mother he ſays, though heaven is my witneſs I ſcarce knew till this moment that ſhe exiſted; and no ſooner, it is probable, has ſhe been made acquainted with the ſame fact in regard to us, than a

thouſand

thouſand infamous calumnies have attended the information. A variety of conjectures crowd upon my mind: but the only particular I can reſt on with any degree of conviction, is, that Mr. Howard muſt not have arrived at a period of life enough advanced to allow with propriety of two female companions of our age; and this circumſtance, to ſlanderous diſpoſitions, has moſt undoubtedly given riſe to theſe abominable ſuſpicions, yet how tainted with vice muſt that heart be, who from an accident ſo ſimple and natural, could infer and propagate accuſations ſo ſcandalous! If this is the world, Sophia, ten thouſand times better it had been for us had we never quitted our peaceful ſolitude.

Yeſterday evening, being what Mrs. Hindon calls her aſſembly night, we had a crowd of viſitors, who played at cards or converſed as they were inclined. Moſt of them, however, did not remain long enough for either; but, as if ſatisfied with having teſtified their politeneſs by ſhewing themſelves, departed a few minutes after they entered.

Mrs. Hindon, who, to do her juſtice, never fails in attention towards my ſiſter and me, introduced to us a number of her friends; but an introduction in England, ſeldom or never, I find, is productive of an acquaintance; it ſerves merely as a pretext that may be laid hold of at pleaſure for that purpoſe, but which, if diſinclined, obliges the parties only to the formality of a diſtant curtſey on their next meeting: a ceremony that is often dropped on ſucceeding interviews.

You may conclude I was not a little confuſed on hearing Captain Farnford's name announced among the firſt whoappeared. He walked directly

rectly to the ſopha on which I was ſeated, and very confidently began to enter into converſation with me, upon general topics with the eaſe and familiarity of the moſt perfect intimacy; but though conſtrained to remain in his company, I thought it by no means neceſſary to puniſh myſelf by attending to his diſcourſe, which ſoon overflowed with the moſt bombaſt and abſurd expreſſions of admiration; I therefore turned from him with unfeigned diſguſt, and addreſſing myſelf to ſome ladies with whom I have contracted a tranſient acquaintance, pretended to be engroſſed with what had ſcarce the power of fixing my wandering thoughts. I found eſcaping from him, however, was quite impracticable, for he followed me for ſome time wherever I went with the moſt obtruſive perſeverance, without ſeeming to remark the repugnance I did not attempt to conceal, nor the contemptuous ſilence with which I liſtened to him.

I flatter myſelf my behaviour at length had the deſired effect. He began to look proudly diſpleaſed, and could no longer conceal the painful mortification his vanity ſuffered from the cold neglect I diſcovered to the diſplay of his accompliſhments. Indeed there is a ſecret ſelf-approbation and conceit diffuſed over his manner, which, independent of any other conſideration, would have alone rendered him diſagreeable to me; though I could perceive he was by no means regarded in this unfavourable point of view by the reſt of the company; on the contrary, the younger female part of it ſeemed to conſider him as a real fine gentleman, whoſe notice was ſolicited with an eagerneſs that ſoothed his pride and ſoftened his mortification.

A ſmall

A ſmall party being invited to ſtay ſupper, I was rejoiced to find that during the latter part of the evening he had changed his plan of operations, and inſtead of tormenting me with unceaſing perſecution, had transferred his attention to a young lady in company, who indeed received it with all the ſatisfaction he could wiſh. He ſeemed to aim at the old attempt of engaging intereſt by exciting jealouſy; from the idea that the ſex cannot with patience ſubmit to the mortification of being rivalled even in the admiration of thoſe for whom they have no value. Heaven grant his ſcheme may continue for ſome time, or rather that it may laſt for ever!

JAN. 22.

How buſy, my Sophia, is our preſent way of life, and how various the ſcenes in which we are engaged! I need now no longer repeat, as I uſed ſo frequently to do, when my journal was dated from our quiet retreat in Languedoc, that it is deficient in intereſt and incident.

More events, my beloved friend, but none of a very pleaſing nature.

We have hitherto left the regulation of our finances wholly to Mr. Howard's care; who, more accuſtomed to matters of this kind than it is to be ſuppoſed my ſiſter or I could be, with his uſual goodneſs undertook to manage all our buſineſs of this nature; being in poſſeſſion of a large ſum for preſent uſe, which is not yet exhauſted, and concluding our fortunes ſecure in the funds under the inſpection of Mr. Benſeley's executors, we imagined ourſelves certain of independence.

Mr.

Mr. Howard has been under ſome apprehenſions, I believe, about this money ever ſince our arrival here, though he forbore alarming us till the truth could be no longer concealed. The ſum is twenty thouſand pounds; all my father ever poſſeſſed; and for which he ſolemnly relinquiſhed all further claims of expectations from his father's bounty (a precaution I find which was unneceſſary). This Mr. Benſeley had originally placed in the ſtocks; but a few days previous to his demiſe, ſome change in public credit unfortunately induced him to ſell out at a very great price, no doubt with the intention of laying out the money to more advantage. His death however, unluckily taking place in the interim, no paper can be found by which the real proprietors of that money are aſcertained. A note alone has been diſcovered, in which Mr. Benſeley acknowledges a debt to my father of four thouſand pounds; and it is but too probable that Fanny and I muſt content ourſelves with this ſmall portion of that affluence of which we always concluded ourſelves ſecure. What is worſe, Mr. Benſeley's affairs are in ſuch embarraſſment and confuſion, that we ſhall not enjoy this little pittance till all is cleared; and as there are a number of creditors, it is likely that even this may be conſiderably reduced.

Mr. Howard ſtrives to perſuade us that things may turn out better, and that it is not impoſſible but ſome lights may yet appear to prove our claims. He has conſulted lawyers on the occaſion, but he confeſſes they are not ſanguine, having given it as their opinion that unleſs writings are found which plainly evince our right, a lawſuit would be an expenſive and ineffectual expedient; and it is evident, from the friendly

chagrin with which he juſt now divulged this diſagreeable intelligence, that he thinks only part of this debt will be recovered. As to our fortune, that is irretrievably gone.

It has been juſtly obſerved, that the pecuniary diſappointments inflicted by Fortune never produce a laſting or painful wound except to minds tainted with avarice: if we are enabled to live with decency and independence, though with the ſtricteſt œconomy, on what ſtill remains to us, I ſhould bluſh to repine at our loſs, though manifold are the advantages reſulting from affluence, and grateful the pleaſure which diſpenſing it procures to the heart.

If our grandfather ſhould prove inexorable, Sophia, the proſpect now is not a comfortable one: but I will not allow an unneceſſary anxiety about the future to add one moment's uneaſineſs to my preſent vexations: Lord Belmont never can permit us to remain in abſolute poverty: at all events, if we are rejected by him, obſcurity muſt be our portion; and then a little—a very little will enable us to ſubſiſt with comfort and decency. H. SEYMOUR.

LETTER XI.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

JAN. 23.

OH! my Sophia! how infinitely am I ſhocked with a diſcovery I have made!

Yeſterday, when I went to Mrs. Weldon's, I found her alone. Her friend, ſhe told me, had

ſent an apology, being a little indiſpoſed; but as you are ſo ſober, ſaid ſhe, I hope you will be almoſt as well pleaſed to ſit and chat *tete à tete* with me, for I expect nobody elſe.

I told her ſhe paid herſelf a bad compliment, if ſhe imagined I did not prefer her company to that of her friends, and that I could not avoid enjoying the lady's detention. Soon after a hand organ in the ſtreet attracted our attention, and ſeveral well known French opera tunes were played very agreeably by a Savoyard, whoſe wife and child made a rude but not unpleaſant accompanyment upon inſtruments that ſeemed to have been invented in the very infancy of muſic. The effect altogether was delightful; and the ſound of airs which had been taught me in my own country recalling a thouſand ſoft and affecting recollections, conveyed me in imagination to dear Languedoc, and threw me into a reverie that wholly abſorbed me.

An intention of rewarding the performer the more liberally perhaps from conſidering him in ſome meaſure as my countryman, induced me to pull up the ſaſh to throw him ſome money; and juſt at that inſtant I perceived Mr. Roatſley paſs the window. He was walking with another gentleman; but on beholding me ſuddenly ſtarted, and bowing ſlightly, with an air of extreme embarraſſment and confuſion haſtily walked away.

The ſight of him threw me into a perturbation not to be conceived. I felt myſelf colour violently; and was ſcarcely able to ſtand. Mrs. Weldon, who from attentively liſtening to the muſic had not obſerved the gentlemen, though ſhe was ſtanding at the window by me, exclaimed, Good heavens, my dear, what can

be the matter? You are all over crimſon. Afraid of her raillery, I choſe not to reveal the real truth, and gave her an evaſive anſwer, expreſſed with ſuch awkwardneſs that it would by no means anſwer the purpoſe intended; but on the contrary, by exciting her curioſity induced her to look out of the window. I knew there muſt be ſomething at the bottom, cried ſhe laughing. Upon my word two very handſome youths, though I can only ſee their backs, for they are almoſt at the end of the ſtreet. However I inſiſt on being informed which of the two it is, the mere ſight of whom has diſcompoſed you ſo prodigiouſly.

After this attack, you may believe I did not chuſe to afford her a ſubject for teizing me by confeſſing the cauſe of my agitation; as I well knew how delighted ſhe always is with a topic on which to diſplay her wit and vivacity. The information that it was Mr. Roatſley was little calculated to make her ſpare me; and beſides of neceſſity muſt have led to a communication which I did not wiſh. I therefore evaded her enquiries in the beſt manner I could contrive, though not without difficulty, under pretence of an indiſpoſition which I knew ſhe did not credit.

Oh! Sophia! the expreſſive manner in which Roatſley regarded me, was ſo ſtriking, that it muſt have made the moſt forcible impreſſion on my mind had I even received no hints to guide me to unravel its meaning; but after the dreadful intelligence which accident has brought to my knowledge, too well, alas! am I enabled to interpret the gravity and melancholy that was ſtrongly pictured in his countenance. But I muſt

muſt haſten to other particulars—particulars that have ſhocked me beyond expreſſion.

Juſt as Mrs. Weldon and I had finiſhed a *tete à tete* meal, a thundering rap announced viſitors, and the inſtant after Sir Edward, (for I know not his other name,) entered.

I was ſomewhat diſcompoſed at his appearance, after the freedom of his behaviour the evening I had been in his company; though to do him juſtice, he had treated me with more reſpect than ſeemed to influence the reſt of his companions. I therefore aſſumed a look of grave reſerve, and took no part in a very lively diſcourſe which inſtantly commenced between him and Mrs. Weldon, though they often ſeverally addreſſed themſelves to me, and made many attempts to engage me in it.

After ſitting a quarter of an hour, Mrs. Weldon left the room to bring ſome drawings for the animadverſion of Sir Edward, who profeſſed himſelf a connoiſſeur; and concluding ſhe would immediately return, I kept my ſeat, with the intention of remaining till Mrs. Hindon and Fanny ſhould call for me in their way to an aſſembly, whither I meant to accompany them. But ſcarce was ſhe gone, when Sir Edward advancing, reſumed the ſtile of addreſs with which I had been ſo much importuned the laſt time I had been in his company; and throwing himſelf at my feet, with a profuſion of the moſt extravagant compliments ſwore he had adored me ever ſince he had enjoyed the happineſs of ſeeing me, and that he had been the moſt miſerable of men, and muſt remain ſo, unleſs I would diſcard the cold and cruel reſerve with which I received all his attentions.

I was petrified with aſtoniſhment; and ring

ſing in order to leave him, aſſured him I never diſcovered either diſtance or repugnance, but in company which naturally inſpired thoſe feelings.

Loveliеſt of women! cried he, wherein can I have been ſo wretched as to diſpleaſe you? How can I have inadvertently fallen into an error which is the fault on earth I ſhould moſt deplore, and which were it neceſſary I would expiate with my life? Do not imagine, all divine as you are, that your charms can be heightened or your beauty rendered more irreſiſtible from that air of haughtineſs and diſdain, which would deſtroy the power of any features but your own, nor conclude that you will augment the number of your ſlaves from the ſeverity and cruelty of the chains with which you muſt bind all hearts that behold you.

Sir, cried I, confounded at this ſpeech, and a great many others in the ſame ſtrain which ſucceeded, and ſtill more by the manner in which they were pronounced, while he ſtood between me and the door with the intention of preventing me from eſcaping—for heaven's ſake allow me to depart. I flattered myſelf the diſapprobation I teſtified ſo lately at a ſimilar behaviour, would have entirely put an end to compliments and a converſation which confounds and bewilders me; and I alſo hoped that the regret you expreſſed for having alarmed and ſhocked me, would not have been ſo ſoon followed by the ſame inhumanity. I thought myſelf under obligations to you then, Sir, for relieving me from another gentleman's perſecution; let me, I entreat you, have reaſon to expreſs my thanks once more for delivering me from your own.

The earneſtneſs with which I uttered theſe words

words ſeemed to ſtrike him; yet for ſome time he went on in the ſame incomprehenſible ſtile, till at length I exclaimed—What on earth, Sir, does all this mean? I am perplexed and bewildered. I know not what to make of your diſcourſe.

Madam, ſaid he, with an evident change in his countenance and ſome heſitation, my converſation cannot have confounded and bewildered you more than yours aſtoniſhes me. If ſuch are your real ſentiments, why do I behold you here?

At this queſtion, pronounced ſo ſeriouſly, I felt as if I was thunderſtruck. A thouſand ſuſpicions, confuſed and terrifying, ruſhed upon my mind.

Tell me, cried I with terror, tell me, why I ought not to be here.

Miſs Seymour, anſwered he with encreaſing earneſtneſs, I bluſh for myſelf. I perceive I have been egregiouſly deceived, and my confuſion deprives me of power to apologize for my behaviour. All that I now can do to atone for my offence is, to inform you that this houſe is by no means a proper place, nor is its owner a ſafe companion, for a young lady of your appearance.

My God! exclaimed I in horror, for at that inſtant he who had been but a moment before the object of my diſlike and apprehenſion, ſeemed now my ſole dependance and only ſecurity from inſult and deſpair—My God! what ſhall I do?

Be not alarmed I beſeech you, cried he, and be aſſured that as certainly as I have warned you of your danger I ſhall myſelf ſecure you from it. You have nothing to fear.

I was very near fainting, from the ſhock of this

this dreadful information; and anxious as was my deſire of quitting inſtantly the houſe, I had not power to move. At laſt, when I had recovered myſelf, I entreated Sir Edward to order a chair. He inſtantly complied; and having pulled the bell, deſired the footman to make haſte.

The ſhort interval which paſſed till the chair was ready, was the moſt awkward that can be imagined. My unſpeakable impatience rendered it an age; and to my agitation and terror was ſuperadded the moſt painful confuſion. I could hardly look Sir Edward in the face after the explanation he had made of my ſituation, and he himſelf ſeemed equally at a loſs. My diſtreſs was not, you may conceive, much abated, by an expreſſion which inadvertently dropt from him upon my confeſſing my apprehenſions for Mrs. Weldon's return before I had left the houſe. Be aſſured, Madam, ſaid he, ſhe will take particular care not to interrupt us. This ſpeech at once finiſhed her character, and informed me that ſhe had planned the interview; in procuring which ſhe probably purſued her own intereſt.

Good heavens, Sophia, is it poſſible that this woman, to whom nature has been ſo bountiful, ſo prodigal of her gifts; who poſſeſſes ſo abundantly the inſinuating power of pleaſing, and whoſe converſation is in general as refinedly delicate as it is judicious and agreeable—is it poſſible that ſhe is the moſt infamous and abandoned of her ſex: ſhe who enjoys the talent of engaging admiration and affection almoſt in the very moment that her conduct cannot but excite diſapprobation? Good heavens! into what a gulph of miſery might I not have been plunged,

plunged, had not the hand of Providence been held forth to extricate me from the labyrinth of deſtruction in which I had been entangled.

The inſtant the chair arrived, Sir Edward ſupported me into it, for I could ſcarce move; having firſt procured me a glaſs of water, which my impatience ſuffered me only juſt to put to my lips. Having no attendant, Sir Edward was ſo obliging as to walk by the ſide of the chair to ſee me ſafe home; where I found Mrs. Hindon and Fanny dreſt for their viſit; but perceiving me ſo ill and diſordered, I could prevail with neither to fulfil their intention, my ſiſter poſitively refuſing to leave me, and Mrs. Hindon imagining herſelf obliged in politeneſs to appear equally anxious.

As that lady's love of talking renders her often imprudently communicative, I did not chooſe to confeſs the private cauſe of my indiſpoſition, but retiring to my apartment, poured out the fulneſs of my heart to my dear Fanny, who lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven in aſtoniſhment that ſuch a character exiſted on earth.

When I recall to mind the addreſs with which Mrs. Weldon contrived to impoſe upon me, and the ingenious methods by which ſhe inſpired me with the beſt opinion of her heart, I am loſt in aſtoniſhment and horror to think that ſuch a character lives. Here then is the infamous and ſecret cauſe brought to light of that warm attachment which ſhe teſtified with ſo much fervour to us both, but chiefly to me, and which ſtole ſo imperceptibly upon my affections, that ſhe was every day gaining ground in our eſteem, in ſpite of ſeveral little improprieties of behaviour, that ſerved however only as foils to

her other good qualities, and to which ſhe poſſeſſed the art of giving what turn ſhe pleaſed. Under pretence of buſineſs, I now recollect ſhe never would conſent to viſit at Mr. Hindon's, though I carried repeated meſſages from his lady, aſſuring her ſhe ſhould be happy to ſee any of our friends, that morning excepted when ſhe ventured to call for the purpoſe of ſoliciting my forgiveneſs in order to further the barbarous purpoſe of engaging me to meet Sir Edward. He no doubt had bribed her to his purpoſe. Let me not blame him however, whatever were the ſteps he took to obtain the interview, ſince the artful woman no doubt repreſented me to him in a falſe point of view, and the delicacy of his behaviour on this occaſion has laid me under obligations to him which I can never recall without gratitude. So ſacred muſt I hold the fame of a woman, however infamous, whom I once called my friend, that I will not confeſs even to Mr. Howard what dupes we have been to her artifice and duplicity. As for Mrs. Hindon, my terror and eſcape would to her appear juſt the counterpart of the good ſtory of my alarm before, and would I make no doubt prove equally the ſubject of her mirth and diverſion. I therefore reſolved to ſay nothing of an event which has ſhocked me ſeverely, farther than to acknowledge that ſome reports of her conduct have reached my ears which have induced me no longer to continue our intimacy.

Poor Madame de Clarence! Much, much, I fear, ſhe has had ſufficient reaſon for her jealouſy; and I accuſe myſelf moſt ſeverely for having given credit to the vile ridicule thrown on her by Mrs. Weldon.

I ſlept little all night; and to-day I really feel more

more uncomfortable than can be conceived. I have not only loſt a friend and an agreeable companion, which of itſelf in our ſituation is irreparable, but I have found her to be criminal and unworthy. I fear I ſhall grow ſuſpicious in future; for never could I have been more compleatly deceived than with regard to Mrs. Weldon, whoſe greateſt fault I imagined conſiſted in a love of admiration and a paſſion for coquetry, which is ſaid in ſome degree to pervade the whole ſex, and often ſubſiſts in the moſt innocent hearts.

But oh! can you gueſs the circumſtance which of all others tortures me the moſt painfully, and dwells perpetually in my thoughts? What muſt Mr. Roatſley's ideas have been, how muſt his ſuſpicions have received confirmation, from beholding me ſtanding with a woman of this character, at the window of her reſidence! No wonder that he ſtarted and changed colour. No doubt he had heard of her before; and I can now partly trace the cauſe of thoſe calumnies, to account for which puzzled and perplexed me ſo extremely. Our intimacy with Mrs. Weldon muſt have been the origin of all the defamatory reports that have reached his ears. But oh! Sophia! how will he be undeceived—and when? Is there any thing ſo tender, ſo delicate, ſo irretrievable, as the reputation of a young woman? and when once wounded in the ſlighteſt manner, however injudiciouſly and unjuſtly, how difficult does it prove wholly to obliterate the ſtain and to efface the falſe impreſſion! This dreadful reflection hurts me to the ſoul, and for ſome time was quite intolerable. But a few hours conſideration have abated in ſome meaſure its acute force;

and

and I have been calling up the aſſiſtance of conſcious innocence and dignity to my aſſiſtance, which tells me it is weakneſs to allow calumny to poiſon that repoſe which has never been embittered from vice.

Mrs. Hindon inſiſts on our attending her this evening to the Opera, an entertainment at which we have not yet been preſent; for as I agree with Lady Linroſe in opinion that till we are properly introduced we ought not often to appear in public, I have hitherto reſiſted all her intreaties, though it is the amuſement, if of any, from which I promiſe myſelf moſt pleaſure. You may believe I was never leſs diſpoſed for being entertained than at this moment. Indeed the utmoſt gratification I could receive, would be to indulge my ſerious humour at home. But for that very reaſon I have forced myſelf to conſent to go. It is a duty I think to be chearful when one is unconſcious of meriting ſelf-reproach, and can raiſe our hearts in gratitude to heaven that no viſible calamity hangs over us.

FOUR O'CLOCK.

About an hour ago, while I was engaged writing in my dreſſing-room, I was informed by Thereſe that Sir Edward Sudbury was below, and requeſted the honour of ſeeing me if not particularly engaged; and on entering the parlour, I perceived my new acquantance, who politely apologized for the liberty he had taken of enquiring after my health; but the ſituation in which I left you laſt night, Madam, ſaid he, gave me ſo much uneaſineſs, that my deſire of making

making perſonal enquiries was not to be reſiſted.

I found myſelf at firſt a little embarraſſed; but ſummoned courage to tell him that his viſit required no ſort of apology, as I ſhould ever regard myſelf as particularly indebted to him for an explanation which might not otherwiſe for ſome time have reached my ears. This ſpeech, ſhort as it was, alluded to recollections which wounded me ſo ſeverely, that my cheeks were dyed with bluſhes; and I heſitated more than once before I came to the concluſion. Sir Edward himſelf ſeemed almoſt in equal confuſion; and his manner appeared ſo modeſt, mild, and reſpectful, that I could ſcarce recognize him for the man who had joined with his riotous companions in giving me ſuch pain and mortification. But large allowances ought certainly to be made for his behaviour where his freedom was neither ſuſpected to occaſion pain, nor apprehended to be conſidered as an inſult.

JAN. 24.

Yeſterday evening we accompanied Mrs. Hindon to the Opera, the amuſement of all others the moſt ſuited to my taſte; indeed in the ſtate my ſpirits then were, it was the only one for which I could have felt the ſlighteſt reliſh. A faint hope which I had entertained, that chance might carry Roatſley there alſo, conquered my reluctance at going, and ſupported me with courage and ſpirits for the exertion.

The inſtant I was ſeated, I caſt my eyes around the houſe in hopes of ſeeing him, tho' I well knew the confuſion the ſight of him muſt have

have given me, but without ſucceſs, for he was no where to be found.

Sunk and diſappointed, I tried to attend to the muſic; and endeavoured to forget my dejection by participating in the general gaiety that ſat on every countenance but mine. My attempts were however fruitleſs. The ſongs, which in private uſed to charm me, now, tho' improved to the higheſt pitch of perfection by the moſt admirable vocal performers and the moſt excellent accompanyment, could not even fix my wandering attention; and Mrs. Hindon's remarks, by interrupting a train of ideas that abſorbed me, proved extremely fatiguing. Her inceſſant talking, poor woman, indeed almoſt exhauſted me, and I felt as a ſevere taſk the ſhare I was conſtrained to take in a converſation ſo little intereſting. Oh! how painful it is, Sophia, to cover a heavy heart under the maſk of chearfulneſs!

Melico had at length began one of his moſt melting ſongs; and it accorded ſo well "with my ſoul's ſadneſs" at that moment, that not only my attention was unavoidably engaged, but my inquietude ſoothed and lulled into compoſure. At this moment I accidentally diſcovered the face I had ſo anxiouſly ſought in one of the ſide boxes, not very far diſtant from that part of the pit where I was placed. I felt my face glow and my heart beat with great violence. He did not however obſerve me; but ſtood behind a young lady, who was indeed uncommonly beautiful, and with whom he converſed with infinite eagerneſs and animation. I thought I could perceive that their diſcourſe was equally intereſting to both. They ſmiled delighted to each other, at particular paſſages of the

the ſong that ſeemed to enchant them, and tho' ſurrounded by ſeveral perſons of both ſexes, appeared wholly engroſſed with each other.

At laſt, however, he looked round; and on diſcovering us bowed with politeneſs, which inſtantly carried the eyes of the young lady towards our party; and the moment after I ſaw that ſhe was enquiring of him who we were. The ideas which this little circumſtance produced, and my conjectures what anſwer he could give to her interrogatories, added to my pain and confuſion. Soon after I obſerved that he had quitted her; and while I was watching with anxiety to find in what part of the houſe he meant to place himſelf, gueſs my perturbation on finding that he had actually ſeated himſelf on the bench immediately behind me, where there happened to be a ſpare place. His face was overſpread with a deep colour while he paid me his compliments; and there was an air of gravity and penetration in his countenance, as if he ſought in mine the refutation or confirmation of his doubts, while this ſuſpicion mortified and wounded me ſo cruelly, that I was apprehenſive of raiſing the ſame commotion I had done at the play.

He perceived I looked diſturbed; and attributing it to the extreme heat, enquired with ſuch evident ſoftneſs if I was not ill, that the tender and unexpected anxiety he manifeſted on this occaſion gave an inſtant revival to my ſpirits.

He then regretted his bad fortune, he ſaid, in having ſo unluckily miſſed ſeeing us when he had called at Mr. Hindon's both that day and the evening before; this, through the negligence of that gentleman's ſervants, had never come

come to our knowledge; and oh! what uneaſineſs would it not have ſpared me to have known that Mr. Roatſley had taken this ſtep towards having his unjuſt ſurmiſes confuted! I aſſured him the favour he had done us had been entirely unknown to Mr. Howard, who undoubtedly would have immediatly acknowledged his attention. He then began to talk of our accidental rencontre in the packet boat, and paid me a number of unmerited compliments on the compoſure of my behaviour; for although I did not, like my poor Fanny, allow my terrors to diſtract me, I was very far from deſerving the encomiums he laviſhed on me. Pray, my Sophia, do not his exaggerations on this occaſion betray—— But I ſee you ſmile. I will however be perfectly unreſerved.—Does it not manifeſt ſomething like partiality? and may I not draw this inference from it, that he will be open to conviction. Of this I may ſurely be confident; that although to the eye of a man ſo penetrating, ſo intelligent as Roatſley, many errors and defects in my manner and converſation muſt be apparent, new as I am to the world and ignorant of its forms and etiquettes, yet no real impropriety, nothing below the dignity of the female character, can poſſibly be diſcovered by a candid and well diſpoſed mind; and this little pride, my dear, enabled me, after my firſt flutters were over, to acquit myſelf during the remainder of the evening with tolerable eaſe. Supported by conſcious rectitude, I determined not to yield to the baſhfulneſs and conſtraint which were ſtealing upon me; but in juſtice to my own character to ſhew myſelf to him ſuch as I really was, and leave him to repent and bluſh for the injury he had done me.

He

He often recurred to the accident that had produced our acquaintance, and called it the moſt fortunate of his life. The moſt fortunate of your life, cried Fanny, who is extremely literal: that is ſtrange indeed. Sure there can be no ſort of pleaſure in being frightened out of one's wits, and very near being drowned into the bargain? for my own part I never reflect on it without horror.

This return to his compliment, uttered with ſuch *naiveté*, made him ſmile. Nay, ſaid ſhe, the ſtorm was ſo violent that I think the moſt courageous of men needed not have bluſhed to have owned themſelves terrified.

Had I been in danger of loſing my courage on that occaſion, ſaid he, Miſs Seymour would have taught me my duty.

Mr. Howard at this moment joined us. Mr. Roatſley and he ſeemed mutually pleaſed at meeting; and ſoon after the latter whiſpered that Lady Linroſe was in the houſe, and pointed her out to us in the box which Roatſley had juſt quitted.

Our curioſity to ſee her was inexpreſſible: ſhe ſeems under fifty, and poſſeſſes an air of majeſtic dignity in her appearance, blended however with a cold ſeverity of aſpect that deſtroys the admiration her figure excites, and renders her countenance harſh and unamiable. It is indeed wholly devoid of that affability of expreſſion which denotes a diſpoſition to be pleaſed, and which ever confers pleaſure on the beholder. The inſtant I had ſtudied her features, I could not perſuade myſelf I ſhould ever recognize either the kind relation or tender friend in Lady Linroſe.

From having obſerved Mr. Roatſley of her party,

party, I naturally conjectured he muſt be of her acquaintance, and began to flatter myſelf that through this unexpected channel of intelligence I might be able to learn ſome particulars relating to a family, with whom, in ſpite of our preſent prepoſſeſſions, we may one day become as intimately connected by affection as we are at preſent from conſanguinity. I therefore demanded if he was acquainted with that lady in black, pointing to the part of the houſe where ſhe was placed.

What lady pray? ſaid he.

That lady, cried Fanny: ſhe who ſits to the right in the box you were juſt now ſeated in. Don't you think ſhe is the moſt ſevere, diſagreeable-looking woman you ever beheld.

What lady do you talk of? repeated he, aſtoniſhed no doubt at Fanny's inconſiderate warmth of expreſſion.

Lady Linroſe, returned ſhe. You have been of her party all this time. Sure you muſt know her?

As Mr. Roatſley was ſilent, and did not ſeem inclined to give the ſlighteſt encouragement to Fanny's thoughtleſs imprudence, who, unacquainted with the etiquette of ſociety, perpetually diſregards the little artifices which common politeneſs demands, and never once conſidered that Lady Linroſe might be, for any thing ſhe knew, one of the moſt intimate of his friends, I endeavoured to check her from proceeding farther, but in vain. Lord, continued ſhe, inattentive to the coldneſs with which he liſtened to her remarks, don't you think ſhe looks croſs and ill-natured? I have not once obſerved her ſmile or look pleaſed all the while I have been watching her countenance: beſides,

Hermione,

Hermione, turning to me, is it not very ſtrange for a widow to make a public appearance ſo early? I thought nobody had done ſo in England till at leaſt ſix months after their huſband's deceaſe; did not Mrs. Hindon ſay ſo the other evening, when we were on this ſubject? Oh! but I had forgot that they did not live together, and my Lord was ſo ill-humoured, I ſuppoſe, her Ladyſhip conſidered him as no great loſs, though I think ſhe might have ſhewn a little more regard to his memory though only for the ſake of decency.

I tried by a look to ſtop her volubility: tho' in fact my own ſentiments of her Ladyſhip's conduct in this laſt inſtance were ſimilar to my ſiſter's. Her *prudence* has not impreſſed us, you may believe, with the moſt favourable opinion of her *heart*; and this procedure, which I am told is unuſual, was not calculated for improving it.

Mr. Roatſley's gravity deterred me, however, from avowing my ſecret thoughts. Pray, ſaid he to Fanny, after a ſhort pauſe, with a half ſmile—has Lady Linroſe the honour of your acquaintance?

Oh! Lord! no, cried ſhe, without conſidering how unaccountable this violent prepoſſeſſion againſt an utter ſtranger muſt appear, I never beheld her in my life till this moment.

Then, how pray, has ſhe been ſo unlucky as to fall under your diſpleaſure?

My diſpleaſure! cried ſhe, embarraſſed; oh not at all. I merely diſlike her appearance. She looks ſulky and proud, and I hate thoſe ſort of people.

She is very unfortunate indeed, returned he. I then contrived to put a period to the ſubject by

by calling Fanny's attention to another object; for I dreaded the ſuſpicion and curioſity her ſimplicity might excite in Mr. Roatſley, who ſeemed both amuſed and aſtoniſhed at her converſation.

Not for a moment during the remainder of the evening did he leave us; and by the vivacity of his diſcourſe, and the amiable gentleneſs of his manner, he inſenſibly reſtored my tranquillity, diſſipated my confuſion, and inſpired me with a flow of ſpirits almoſt equal to what appears natural to himſelf.

When all was concluded, he attended us to Mrs. Hindon's carriage; and requeſted leave, in polite terms, to indemnify himſelf, he ſaid, for his late diſappointment by waiting on us again.

I have not ſpent an evening ſo agreeably ſince that we paſſed at Dover. Indeed I even give laſt night greatly the preference, it having all the advantages of a moſt painful contraſt to enhance its value. My ſufferings in the early part of the evening conferred a double reliſh on the ſatisfaction of the ſucceeding.

I feel myſelf now relieved from a load of uneaſineſs which I ſupported with much anxiety; for I am convinced from Roatſley's behaviour laſt night, nay from the very expreſſion of his countenance, that we are completely juſtified in his opinion, at leaſt with regard to the vile aſperſions ſo cruelly circulated againſt us.

Sir Edward Sudbury, who did not obſerve us till near the concluſion of the laſt dance, joined us before we left the houſe, and requeſted me to introduce him to Mrs. Hindon; which, as I wiſhed that lady to remain ignorant of the circumſtances of our acquaintance, was rather diſagreeable

diſagreeable to me; however I had no choice, and fortunately contrived to evade her enquiries by informing her of my own accord that I had been in company with him at Mrs. Weldon's.

We are beginning to grow extremely impatient for diſpatches from Nice. Mr. Howard tells us that by courſe of poſt we ought to have received letters before this time; and ſurely on this ſubject little time for conſideration is required. Why then does Lord Blemont retain us in ſuſpence?

JAN. 25.

Mrs. Hindon being rather indiſpoſed to-day, ſhe kept her room all the morning, and taking my work, I went to ſit with her, Fanny having gone to call upon Lady Farnford, whoſe repeated civilities demanded or rather extort ſome return on our part.

Mrs. Hindon was very preſſing with me to accompany her; but you may believe her entreaties had no ſort of effect: as the ſight of Captain Farnford was abſolutely diſagreeable to me, it would be ſtrange indeed, I ſaid, if I threw myſelf in his way when it was in my power ſo eaſily to avoid it.

This viſit naturally led the ſubject to that family, upon which Mrs. Hindon began to laviſh a thouſand encomiums. Lady Farnford is her relation; and there has ever ſubſiſted between them from infancy a very intimate friendſhip. They are extremely oppoſite in point of appearance; Lady Farnford being a little lean figure, with a very cold and dry addreſs; but they are both

both equally prying and inquiſitive, which is I ſuppoſe their chief bond of union, though Lady Farnford does not talk ſo much in a week as her friend does in one day.

Captain Farnford, Mrs. Hindon ſaid, had always been reckoned a young man of very ſhining parts, and his figure and addreſs were ſingularly elegant. He was a little wild to be ſure; but what of that? few young ladies regarded that error as a material fault at his time of life, and in him it ſeemed more the effects of life and gaiety than of any inclination to vice. Some people, it was true, thought him a little extravagant; but this was the foible of a generous mind. For her part, to ſee a young man too *near*, was of all things what moſt diſguſted her; beſides, continued ſhe, as he is not burthened with a wife and family, no doubt he has not turned his mind towards œconomy; but when he is once fairly ſettled, I'll anſwer for it it will be the ſtudy of his life in all reſpects to render the woman of his choice compleatly happy.

I began now to ſuſpect to what all this tended. I tried, however, to ward off an explanation, by coldly acquieſcing in her ſentiments as a perſon unintereſted in the cauſe; but my plan would not ſucceed.

I am glad you think ſo, Miſs Seymour, cried ſhe, for indeed, to tell you the real truth of the matter, the poor Captain is quite in deſpair at your diſtant and frigid manner towards him; and my Lady, whoſe heart is wrapt up in her ſon's happineſs, and who herſelf admires you above all women, deſires nothing on earth ſo fervently as that he may render himſelf acceptable to you. Many a good match has been propoſed

propoſed to Captain Farnford, I aſſure you; but till he ſaw you he hated the very idea of matrimony, to which now he annexes every hope of happineſs.

I am extremely ſorry, Madam, anſwered I, to receive this information. I flattered myſelf my behaviour had ſufficiently explained to Captain Farnford that my ſentiments were fixed and immoveable on this head, and I imagined, if he ſtill deceived himſelf, you was able to have convinced him how little ſucceſsful this application could ever be. If however you, Madam, have been commiſſioned to talk with me on the ſubject, I entreat you will no longer delay acquainting him at once from me, that there is not the ſlighteſt chance—there is nôt even a poſſibility of my altering my reſolution. I hope you will excuſe me when I acknowledge, added I, that there is hardly any propoſal could be made to me at which I ſhould feel a more invincible repugnance, and I earneſtly beg you will mention a ſubject no more which is diſagreeable to me even to think of.

Poh, poh, Miſs Seymour; upon my word you are abſolutely cruel. However I aſſure you I won't carry this meſſage, which I know would be a death warrant to the Captain's hopes. I have known many a young lady change her mind after declaring herſelf ten times more violently determined than you are, and I hope to ſee you alter your reſolution one day in his favour. Indeed if you perſiſt in precluding him from all chance of ſeeing you, how can the young man find opportunity to plead his cauſe? I really think I muſt aſſiſt him. I aſſure you he importunes me inceſſantly for only ten minutes converſation with you, as if it was more than

than life to him, and though your heart is hardened, mine is quite melted at his ſufferings.

If ten minutes converſation would rid me of his ſolicitations for ever, ſaid I, I would certainly puniſh myſelf ſo far as to give him that ſatisfaction; but as I have reaſon to imagine it would rather feed than extinguiſh his hopes, I think it would be as unfair to him as painful to myſelf.

Nay, but till you bid him deſpair yourſelf, you may be convinced what I ſay will have little effect; and I hope when you ſee ſo fine a young man at your feet, you will find yourſelf ſoftened in his favour in ſpite of your preſent oppoſition.

I aſſured her again and again that my diſlike and prepoſſeſſion againſt him were inſurmountable; but ſhe went on without the ſlighteſt regard to all I ſaid, repeating that when we met, I ſhould not be able to adhere to my inflexibility.

The return of Fanny relieved me from this fatiguing converſation. Lady Farnford had loaded her with civilities, and almoſt forced her to promiſe to go back to dinner: Miſs Farnford, on her part, was equally kind, and indeed ſeems reſolved to become Fanny's intimate friend, without any ſort of interchange of affections between them; taking every opportunity of getting her aſide; and quite unſolicited, with the communicative imprudence of a boarding ſchool girl, making her the confidante of a thouſand little trifling love affairs, or, as ſhe terms them, *flirtations*. The equality of their ages, and the flattery which Miſs Farnford ſo laviſhly employs to gain Fanny's confidence, have cemented a ſort of intimacy between them, though

though they are too diſſimilar in diſpoſition even to receive any real gratification from the ſociety of each other.

In the evening Mrs. Hindon being almoſt well, and able to walk into the drawing room, one or two of her female friends came in, and were prevailed with to remain to make up a party at whiſt. Fanny having got half through a favourite novel, took this opportunity of ſlipping up ſtairs to finiſh it; and as I was opening my work box to take out my netting, Mr. Howard drew me aſide from the company. I have got ſomething to ſay to you, Miſs Seymour, ſaid he, and placed himſelf by me on the ſopha.

You muſt know, proceeded he, that your acquaintance Mr. Roatſley, (I coloured at the name) told me laſt night at the opera that if I was at leiſure this morning he would call about twelve, as he wiſhed extremely to have a few minutes converſation with me in private, and this day he kept his appointment.

Oh Sophia! how your Hermione's heart beat at this information, Mr. Howard too looked earneſt and grave. The lights however were at ſome diſtance, and I hope my confuſion was unobſerved.

Mr. Roatſley, continued Mr. Howard, with the politeneſs natural to him apologized with ſome little embarraſſment for the liberty he ſaid he was about to take.

Do you think, Sophia, that I was not embarraſſed at this preamble? Indeed I dare not acknowledge even to myſelf what abſurd notions were at that inſtant crouding into my thoughts.

Mr. Howard went on. He then explained to me, ſaid he, a very intricate ſeries of iniquity, with which I would not ſhock your ears, did I not conceive it as abſolutely neceſſary to put you on your guard.

Good heavens, cried I, what are you going to tell me?

You have no reaſon, thank God, anſwered he, to ſuffer now any apprehenſions, as the danger is at an end; but I cannot call to mind that my own imprudence was the original cauſe of the injurious reports, without the utmoſt ſelf-reproach. I think no man can be more ſenſible than myſelf of the value and importance of my charge, yet I own I committed the moſt unpardonable overſight in allowing you and your ſiſter to remain for a week under the roof of a woman of whoſe character I was not perfectly informed.

Her appearance indeed was ſo plauſible, and your ſtay to be ſo ſhort, that I took it on truſt, nor once harboured a ſuſpicion of her being what ſhe has proved—one of the moſt abandoned and profligate of her ſex: a wretch entirely diveſted of honour and conſcience, who has had the audacity and wickedneſs to traffic with your reputation, and who perceiving you had kindled the preſumptuous wiſhes of a libertine, dared to repreſent you to him in the moſt doubtful, nay in the moſt infamous light, in order, by flattering his licentious hopes, to reap the lucrative fruits of his folly and prodigality.

Oh! my dear Sir, interrupted I in a tone of impatient vexation, let us return to ſolitude and obſcurity, where, though liſtleſſneſs may intrude and languor invade our quiet, danger and mortification never can moleſt us. How unjuſt

have I not been to the cautious experience of my dear father, in ſometimes ſuſpecting he had repreſented the world and its fallacious charms through that medium with which calamity and diſappointment ever inveſt the face of nature. I am now fatally convinced that the pleaſures of ſociety fade and diſappear when oppoſed to the ſnares, anxieties, and diſguſts, which ſour and taint all its enjoyments.

You are too young, and much too amiable, returned Mr. Howard, ſmiling at my impetuoſity, to become a cynic ſo early upon thoſe whom nature has formed to adorn ſociety as well as to improve it. The world has powerful claims; and Miſs Seymour muſt not talk of diſguſt becauſe a temporary mortification obſcures for a moment the many rational enjoyments which it offers to every well regulated mind. But you muſt allow me to go on with my ſtory.

Mr. Roatſley, after expreſſing himſelf in the warmeſt and moſt reſpectful terms of both the amiable ſiſters, confeſſed that he had been infinitely ſhocked and aſtoniſhed to learn, immediately almoſt on his arrival in town, that they were regarded in a very injurious light by his friend Captain Bradſhaw, who from reſiding under the ſame roof had apparently acceſs to proper information, and had received *his* from the woman of the houſe.

Mr. Roatſley confidently aſſerted the falſhood of theſe defamatory ſuſpicions, and requeſted his friend to be more particular in his enquiries, and to talk again with the landlady, who when interrogated ſtill continued to inſinuate that you were not altogether what you appeared. Mr. Roatſley however was not ſo weak as to allow

his judgment to be biaſſed by this report, nor was he led for a moment to do you injuſtice, although he found that rumours to your diſadvantage were preſſed on him from more quarters than one; all originating no doubt from the ſame ſource; till one evening at the play, when he confeſſed———

Oh! repeat it not to me, dear Sir, cried I; I know too well that it was quite natural for him to think me light, thoughtleſs, and imprudent, when he beheld me at Drury-lane attended by the wretch, whom I then found out to be Captain Farnford, and to all appearance voluntarily receiving his attentions: an accident which my indiſpoſition alone occaſioned; for you may believe no inducement on earth, had I been in a ſituation to have repulſed him, ſhould have forced me to have granted him the ſhadow of my notice.

Well, Miſs Seymour, thoughtleſs and imprudent I really believe he might conclude you to be, nor could he poſſiblythink otherwiſe, ignorant as he was of the circumſtances that produced Farnford's attendance, and conſcious of the juſt cauſe he had given you for repugnance and diſdain. He ſaw you together in the ſame party, and it ſeems ſupported by him when you left the box. He could not but imagine you had permitted all this, and of courſe muſt have ſuppoſed your reſentment neither ſo laſting nor ſo ſevere as in ſtrict delicacy he thought it ought to have been. Yet Mr. Roatſley ſolemnly ſwore, that to the diſadvantage of your reputation a doubt or ſuſpicion never once found place in his breaſt; and tho' wholly ignorant myſelf of the circumſtances of the fact, I eaſily convinced him that in a point of delicacy Miſs Seymour could not

not poſſibly be found in the ſlighteſt degree deficient.

That intereſt, however, which youth and beauty ſeldom fail to excite in the heart of a young man, (a ſentiment, added he with a half ſmile, which Mr. Roatſley, ſeems formed to feel with enthuſiaſtic force) made him undergo no little diſappointment I conjecture in perceiving you had ſo ill anſwered the expectation to which your acquaintance, intereſting tho' ſhort, had given birth; for he confeſſed that he had been indefatigable in his enquiries about you, tho' very fruitleſs you may believe they muſt have proved; and tho' I underſtood the hint in this avowal; I did not think myſelf at liberty to ſatisfy his curioſity, and therefore let it paſs unnoticed.

He owns, however, that theſe unjuſt ſurmiſes received ſome degree of credibility from meeting you a few days after, accompanied by this ſame audacious young man, who put you into a chair, unattended by your ſervant, at the door of your former lodgings; but this part of his information I perſiſted in averring was impoſſible, and that he muſt have miſtaken ſome other perſon for you.

Oh it was me indeed, cried I, and the rencontre you may be certain gave me equal pain and terror: nor ſhould I have concealed it for a moment, had not the wretch extorted a promiſe which fear alone perſuaded me to grant him never to divulge it to you.

Good heaven! how did the ſcoundrel contrive to meet with you?

Thro the connivance of that wicked woman, ſaid I. But as my promiſe, tho' conſtrained, remains ſtill in force, except as to that part of it

it which chance has informed you, I am not at liberty to give you the particulars, neither are they at all neceſſary; ſince I hope in God, as the wretch is quite undeceived in regard to my character, I have nothing now to alarm me except the perſecution of ſolicitation, which I hope by ſedulouſly avoiding him to eſcape.

Mr. Howard's mild countenance reddened with indignation at this account, which quickly infuſed an apprehenſion into my mind, that under the character of our guardian he might think it neceſſary to reſent my affronts. The inſtant this idea ſtruck me, I ſoftened as much as poſſible what I had juſt been acknowledging, and aſſured him that during our laſt interview Farnford had appeared ſo much piqued and offended at my unconquerable reſerve, that I had reaſon to flatter myſelf I ſhould be tormented by him no more; and added, that when I was entirely in his power, all he had aſked was forgiveneſs, and permiſſion to viſit me, having repeatedly ſworn that an injurious ſuſpicion of my character had alone given riſe to a conduct which he now ſincerely abjured, and of which he heartily repented.

Let him then teſtify his concern and regret as he ought, by avoiding your preſence, ſaid Mr. Howard. Had I known the other day that I was at the ſame table with the man who had dared ſubject you to inſult, I ſhould moſt aſſuredly———

Then thank heaven you did not, interrupted I. Indeed the leſs this affair is mentioned or remembered the better; and before you leave me I inſiſt on your promiſe never even to hint to Captain Farnford your knowledge of theſe particulars. I aſk it as a favour, the grant of which

which is eſſential to my peace. You need not, I am ſure, be told how delicate an interference of this kind muſt prove, where my fame and my repoſe are ſo deeply intereſted. Let me beſeech you therefore to give me your word never to take notice to Captain Farnford of what you have been informed.

I need not at leaſt be told, ſaid he with gravity, that the title by which I ſhould in that caſe act might be juſtly called in queſtion; but as I have the happineſs at preſent of conſidering you as being under my particular protection, tho' I hope that you will ſoon experience a parent's care, you muſt not inſiſt on binding me from acting as circumſtances may in future require. I agree ſo entirely in your ſentiments however, as to the delicacy of this matter, that you may reſt aſſured while the wretch moleſts you no more I ſhall not interfere, though I ſhould have the moſt perfect ſatisfaction in chaſtiſing him for his impudence.

But I have not done with my diſagreeable explanation, Miſs Seymour, continued Mr. Howard, and your acute ſenſibility almoſt intimidates me from confeſſing all to you, ſince I am afraid what I am going to add muſt wound in a ſtill more vulnerable part; for I am well aware that to a youthful and enthuſiaſtic heart, no blow is ſo painful, no pang is ſo ſevere, as to be told it has beſtowed its affections unworthily.

Theſe words threw me into a ſtate of confuſed conſternation not to be deſcribed, and dyed my cheeks with bluſhes: for indeed my imagination hurried me in an inſtant into a thouſand wild conjectures; the truth however after a moment ruſhed upon my mind. You need

need not fear to alarm me as to this part of your information, cried I, for it is no ſecret to me; and the ſhock, tho' at firſt extremely diſtreſſing, received its cure in the reſentment and indignation which treatment ſo abominable excited. It is of Mrs. Weldon I perceive you are going to ſpeak; but tho' I am in part acquainted with the artifice and duplicity of her character, a myſtery ſurrounds her ſituation through which I have not been able to penetrate. I then briefly related the alarming ſituation into which that horrid woman had ſo artfully drawn me, and the fortunate circumſtances that had relieved me from my danger. Mr. Howard was loſt in aſtoniſhment at my recital, and ſhuddered on reflecting how critical the ſnare might have proved in which this infamous woman had ſo inhumanly entrapped me.

Mr. Roatſley, ſaid he, has let me into the particulars of her hiſtory, which are well known, and have made no ſmall noiſe; tho' from her change of name I never could have ſuſpected that Mrs. Weldon was the famous Mrs. Brereton, whoſe imprudence has long been no ſecret to the world.

Good heavens! cried I, how then could ſuch a woman find admittance to the abode of Madame de Clarence? Has ſhe too been deceived by her artifices?

I believe it is not unknown to you, returned he, that among the number of Monſieur de Clarence's good qualities, thoſe of attachment to his amiable lady, and a proper diſcharge of domeſtic duties, are not to be enumerated. Mrs. Weldon appeared at the chateau as his friend, nor did Madame ſuſpect that under that ſpecious character, ſhe had harboured her

her moſt invidious enemy; till about the time of your departure from Languedoc, or immediately after it.

Mr. Howard then informed me more particularly of this profligate woman's real hiſtory. She was, it ſeems, originally a girl of low birth, whoſe name was Ware, and whoſe uncommon beauty induced Colonel Brereton, at the age of ſixty five, to pay his addreſſes to her, having become violently enamoured from accidentally meeting with her at an aſſembly while his regiment was quartered at York. This gentleman, though of a very limited underſtanding, as may be concluded from his conduct on this imprudent occaſion, poſſeſſed an affluent fortune, and was nearly related to Lord Belmont. His lady's taſte for gallantry became ſoon ſuſpected, and at laſt grew ſo notorious, that finding herſelf gradually deſerted by that brilliant circle to which her marriage had introduced her, and to charm and embelliſh which ſhe poſſeſſed ſo powerfully every talent, ſhe perſuaded her huſband, ever blind to his diſhonour and infatuated by her inſinuating addreſs, to carry her over to France, where her amours, though well known, were leſs prejudicial to her gay career, becauſe unproductive of the world's contempt, at leaſt the faſhionable part of it, and unattended by its deſertion.

Her huſband, dying about a twelvemonth after, bequeathed her his whole fortune, the greateſt part of which had already fallen a ſacrifice to her unbounded extravagance. Mr. Brereton's natural heir, however, at preſent diſputes at law the portion of it that remains, alledging that from ſome private entail he was not empowered to diſpoſe of it at pleaſure; and

is thought the lady will be legally deprived of an inheritance which ſhe ſo little deſerves, and which ſhe gained merely by the effects of her artful management, and the powerful influence ſhe poſſeſſed over her ſuperannuated huſband.

After Mr. Brereton's death, his wife's conduct became ſo flagrant as to force thoſe who had been hitherto willingly blind to her infamy no longer to ſhut their eyes, and as a proper regard to the rules of propriety is a tax which virtue never more rigorouſly exacts from vice than where her genuine and intrinſic value is leaſt admitted, ſhe ſoon found her ſtay in France could not enable her to continue in that brilliant ſociety where ſhe had been accuſtomed to ſhine with ſuch eclat. At this period, her acquaintance with Monſieur de Clarence commenced while he ſpent ſome time at the city of M——— for the recovery of his health, whither his lady had not accompanied him.

He ſoon became enſlaved by the charms of Mrs. Brereton, and weakly conſented to her requeſt of being invited to the reſidence of his lady at the Chateau de Clarence, on the footing of a friend recommended to his peculiar care by her deceaſed huſband. Madame de Clarence was eaſily deceived; and without difficulty conſented to entreat the favour of a viſit from his agreeable Engliſh acquaintance, who on her part regarding it as an ingenious ſtroke of policy to regain in ſome meaſure the good opinion of the world, to whom ſhe might boaſt being ſtill admitted into an intimacy ſo reſpectable, complied with eagerneſs and ſatisfaction. The company of the Chevalier de Mertane ſoon, however,

however, interrupted the harmony which ſubſiſted between Monſieur de Clarence and Mrs. Weldon, (for ſuch was the name ſhe now choſe to aſſume, probably from an apprehenſion that the imprudence of Mrs. Brereton might not be wholly unknown even to Madame de Clarence, whilſt under a borrowed name ſhe might be eaſily impoſed on.) The youth and weakneſs of the Chevalier almoſt inſtantly ſuggeſted to that abandoned woman the hopes of repairing her injured reputation and her exhauſted finances, by an union, the rank and opulence of which offered both to her vanity and profuſion the moſt ample gratification.

This explanation fully accounts for the mortification and diſpleaſure, too painful for concealment, which ſhe ſo evidently diſcovered on perceiving the Chevalier's partiality for me. He was not however proof againſt her powers of faſcination; and after my determined rejection, accepted with great cordiality the conſolation which Mrs. Weldon's kindneſs afforded. He was indeed almoſt involved in this perilous ſnare, when the fortunate jealouſy of Monſieur de Clarence happily relieved him from his danger. That gentleman, influenced either by pique or principle, or perhaps by both, ſuddenly informed the Chevalier's father of the ſon's matrimonial intentions, as alſo with ſome particulars relating to the lady's character, which induced the old gentleman to appear unexpectedly one morning at the chateau, from whence he carried off the Chevalier, without allowing him the ceremonial of a private farewell conference with his miſtreſs.

From more circumſtances than one both Mr. Howard and I perceived that this affair muſt have

have been in agitation during the time of our abode in the family; for the poor Chevalier's departure ſucceeded ours but a few days, and it ſeems a thorough reconciliation having taken place between Mrs. Weldon and Monſieur de Clarence, their mutual imprudence ſoon infuſed ſuſpicions into Madame which induced her to inſiſt upon that lady's inſtant diſmiſſion. To this demand the huſband, unwilling to come to an open rupture with Madame, whoſe family and connections demand peculiar reſpect, conſented; and Mrs. Weldon's law-ſuit requiring her preſence in England, ſhe ſet off directly for this country.

I was actually frozen with horror on learning this account. Good heavens! exclaimed I, does ſuch a character of vice and duplicity, exiſt, and can it belong to woman?

Oh! Miſs Seymour, returned Mr. Howard, a mind like yours, delicate and pure, bleſſed with conſcious innocence and fortified with intuitive integrity, can form no ideas adequate to that degradation to which licentiouſneſs and profligacy often reduce the female mind; but to dwell no longer on a theme ſo melancholy, I muſt inform you, that after havingrelated theſe particulars, which Mr. Roatſley had received from a friend lately arrived from the Continent, and intimately acquainted with the parties concerned, he confeſſed how inexpreſſibly confounded and aſtoniſhed he had been on perceiving you the morning before laſt ſtanding at the window of a houſe which he had been told was occupied by his unworthy relation; and ſtill more was he ſhocked, when at a ſecond glance, he recollected Mrs. Brereton herſelf, whoſe features he inſtantly recognized, though

it

it is many years ſince he beheld her. Scarcely could he credit his ſenſes. Yet ſo ſtrongly did the dignity and innocence of your countenance contradict this confirmation of your levity, that inſtead of convincing it awakened him from his error. Imprudent he might believe you, but infamous it was impoſſible he could ſuſpect you to be; and upon revolving the circumſtances in his mind, it inſtantaneouſly ſtruck him that the daring Farnford muſt have bribed that infamous woman to entrap you to her houſe. This idea no ſooner occurred, than a thouſand circumſtances ſeemed to enforce its conviction. Farnford's character, which though unſtained by actual villainy, is looſe and unprincipled, aſſured him he would not be ſcrupulous in effecting his ends by whatever means in his power. He knew beſides that the woman was in his pay, and to lay him under further contributions, ſhe might be induced to miſrepreſent your behaviour, conſcious that the knowledge of your being a woman of rank and character muſt have checked his hopes and reſtrained his liberality to herſelf. Mr. Roatſley began to ſuſpect that your acquaintance with Mrs. Weldon might have originated alſo from ſome ſuch machinations, and he inſtantly determined to acquaint me with his ſuſpicions; and having enquired at our old lodgings for our preſent reſidence with the eagerneſs of a man of honour anxious to ſecure virtue and innocence from deſtruction, he haſtened to this houſe without loſs of time; for me only he enquired, for to me only could ſo delicate an explanation be made, but I was unluckily from home. Next morning he repeated his viſit, but being engaged in buſineſs, he was denied admittance. On his

his return home, however, he encountered a gentleman with whom he is particularly intimate, and who in the confidence of friendſhip confeſſed to him how amazed he had been to meet with a young lady not only of the moſt elegant but of the moſt innocent and amiable appearance at the houſe of his profligate relation, Mrs. Weldon, who from being now notoriouſly infamous, was wholly excluded all honourable ſociety: his friend added, that this abandoned woman had repreſented the young lady, whoſe name was Seymour, as a girl of light character and dependant fortune, but having been more than once in her company, this injurious error had appeared to him ſo apparent, that he had thought it incumbent on him to atone for it by repreſenting to her the hazards of her ſituation, an information that had operated ſo violently on her ſpirits as fully convinced him how entirely ſhe muſt have been deceived as to the character of her companion.

Amiable, generous Roatſley! May not I call the man ſo, my Sophia, who has ſo humanely intereſted himſelf in my affairs? How many, in a ſimilar ſituation, would have contented themſelves with leaving me to my fate, eſpecially after that perplexed ſeries of unfortunate events, which might have too juſtly led him to regard me with contempt? how few would have given themſelves the trouble of inveſtigating this matter to the foundation, and exerted themſelves in a manner ſo nobly, to extricate a young woman whoſe conduct he had ſo much reaſon to contemn, and who had been repreſented to him in a light ſo unworthy? Surely gratitude at leaſt may be allowed me after this ſtriking inſtance of a benevolence of which I have

have reaped ſo largely the fruit: yet heaven grant that this dangerous ſentiment lead not my heart too far. Vexatious it has indeed proved; but ah! Sophia, had not heaven directed and preſerved me, this intelligence had arrived greatly too late.

The whiſt party breaking up, and ſupper being announced, Mr. Howard ſeized an opportunity, while we were on the ſtairs, to whiſper that Mr. Roatſley regretted extremely not having ſeen my ſiſter and me this morning, when he had called, particularly as he leaves town tomorrow, and is engaged by buſineſs the early part of the day. Mr. Howard however, who was not ſufficiently acquainted with many of the unaccountable facts to which Mr. Roatſley's ſtory alluded, and was only enabled, from his knowledge of my diſpoſition and character, to pronounce that ſome myſterious appearances muſt have involved my actions in obſcurity, had of his own accord offered him a ſhort viſit before his departure, to explain from my own information what had ſeemed either extraordinary or imprudent in my conduct, and is actually to meet him at the Britiſh Coffee-houſe for that purpoſe.

I hope, added that worthy friend, with a penetrating ſmile, as he entered the ſupper room, that Mr. Roatſley, in his return to town, will find the diſagreeable air of ſecrecy and myſtery, which muſt confound all his enquiries reſpecting you and your ſiſter, completely removed by the approbation and public countenance of Lord Belmont.

I took no notice of this little hint; but walked on with a mind ah! how enlightened! how relieved! to find myſelf reinſtated in Mr. Roatſley's

Roatſley's good opinion; to know that he had ſhewn himſelf ſo anxious, ſo deeply concerned in an affair in which I alone was intereſted, gave a ſpirit to my countenance, and a gaiety to my heart, not to be enjoyed but when contraſted by previous uneaſineſs and depreſſion.

JAN. 28.

Ah! my dear Sophia! how infinitely am I ſhocked! Poor Madame de Clarence! alas! ſhe is no more! A ſhort letter from her huſband, which I received laſt night, announces this melancholy intelligence. An epidemic fever carried her off after a week's illneſs, and Fanny and I have been weeping her irreparable loſs with tears of bitter affliction. A friend——a maternal friend! reſpected and beloved, is a bleſſing which heaven ſends but once in our lives, and to us can never be ſupplied. In our preſent ſituation, this blow cannot fail to be felt with redoubled poignancy. There now remains not to us one ſingle friend of our own ſex, (my Sophia, my invaluable Sophia excepted) who excites or returns to us the tender intereſt of affection. What a diſmal, what a ſolitary ſtate! That wretch, Mrs. Weldon! how I deteſt her, for troubling with ſuſpicion and uneaſineſs the mind of that amiable, that reſpectable woman, ſo near the cloſe of her days! Oh were ſhe capable of remorſe, how muſt it wring her boſom at this moment!

I am inexpreſſibly anxious to learn a thouſand particulars relating to this dear friend's laſt illneſs: for her huſband's letter is extremely conciſe, and merely informs us, in terms of unfeigned

unfeigned affliction, of the melancholy event. Doubtleſs he muſt be overwhelmed with the moſt poignant diſtreſs; that diſtreſs which reſults from the reflection of a miſconduct he preſerves no longer the power of repairing.

We inclined much to indulge our ſadneſs in our own apartment; but Mrs. Hindon ſoon drove us from ſolitude by inſiſting upon ſitting with us in order to *comfort us:* and the poor woman talked ſo inceſſantly of the delicacy and acuteneſs of her feelings, and repeated ſuch various inſtances of the exceſs of her own unfortunate ſenſibility, that we were glad to accompany her down ſtairs to the gentlemen, as ſome relief from her tedious converſation.

FEB. 1.

Sir Edward called again this morning. He really appears to be an amiable man, and poſſeſſes ſomewhat in his appearance ſo mild and unpreſuming, that he prepoſſeſſes one at firſt ſight in his favour.

I forgot to tell you that Mr. Roatſley and Mr. Howard met the other morning according to appointment; and after an explanatory converſation, which the former aſſured Mr. Howard was wholly unneceſſary, as not a doubt could remain on his mind after having been favoured with an opportunity of being in Miſs Seymour's company at the Opera, he ſet out on his excurſion.

FEB. 2.

Sir Edward ſupped with us this evening. Mrs. Hindon, delighted with an acquaintance of his figure and addreſs, has given him a general invitation to her houſe, which he ſeems well diſpoſed to accept, and repays her civilities with abundant marks of atttention.

FEB. 6.

Captain Wilmot had been, as uſual, in earneſt converſation yeſterday evening with Fanny, who while ſhe pretends to laugh at his abſurdities always appears pleaſed with his aſſiduities. He had been repeating to her a number of verſes, all on the ſoft ſubject of love, which he informed her were the effuſions of his own paſſion that had inſpired him with a poetical ardour. Of one of theſe Fanny inconſiderately requeſted a copy, not reflecting that to demand a poem, of which ſhe was herſelf the theme, confeſſed no little ſatisfaction at the compliment. Wilmot told her he had it in his pocket book, which he haſtily produced; and anxious to avoid obſervation, privately delivered to her a paper without himſelf looking into it.

Fanny having no opportunity to peruſe the ſtanzas, ſlipped them into her pocket, from whence ſhe drew them the moment we retired after ſupper: when conceive her aſtoniſhment on finding the copy of verſes converted into a letter directed to Captain Wilmot. Haſtily throwing her eyes over it, ſhe was ſtruck with the words—"your old flame Jenny Parſons," and ſuddenly yielding to a curioſity which cannot

not be defended, ſhe took advantage of the poor youth's unfortunate blunder, and read as follows:

TO CAPTAIN WILMOT.

DEAR WILMOT.

Your epiſtle arrived very opportunely to rouſe me from a ſtupor that has congealed and benumbed all my faculties ever ſince we were ordered to this confounded quarter, which is undoubtedly the dulleſt ſpot under heaven, and which Providence ſeems to have ſtamped with an impreſſion of gloom and laſſitude not to be expreſſed. There is not a ſoul in the town with whom one can aſſociate with any degree of ſatisfaction. The very girls are as ugly as devils; and what is ſtill worſe, as moſt of the officers are either on furlow or abſent on recruiting duty, there are none here except Wilſon and the Major; and the latter is ſo conſtantly immured amidſt a library of muſty old folios, that it is merely at meſs hours we ever ſet eyes upon him.

I am extremely happy to learn, from your letter, that the time which hung ſo heavily on my hands, *you* have been employing ſo much to your ſatisfaction and advantage. From the account you give me of your Dulcinea, I agree with you in opinion that ſhe will not hold out the ſiege much longer, when to your own aſſiduities are ſuperadded the aſſiſtance and ſolicitations of your aunt, who being a diſcreet matron may give an air of credit and propriety to a ſtep which, with all due deference, you muſt allow me to call imprudent, as I ſuſpect the fortune of the beautiful Seymour is no leſs neceſſary to

the rapacious demands of your creditors, than the poſſeſſion of the young lady herſelf is to the claims of your paſſion; but I ſincerely hope, thro' the prudent management of Mrs. Hindon, ſhe has no chance of being made acquainted with theſe diſagreeable and *unneceſſary* particulars till the information can be attended with no alarming conſequences.

It muſt be confeſſed, Wilmot, that for one ſo *deeply* enamoured you talk very *reaſonably* on the topic of your miſtreſs; and though you tell me ſhe is divine, you evidently prefer expatiating on her more ſubſtantial attractions. You retail, indeed, her proſpects and poſſeſſions with the accuracy of an army agent.

I hope, by this time, you have brought matters to a happy concluſion. Indeed, as your affairs are at preſent ſituated, no time is to be loſt. Fortune does not throw a gift of ten thouſand pounds into the arms of a ſoldier every day; and you may reaſonably conclude that the grand-father will not be ſo eaſily *melted to compliance*, as you tell me the girl herſelf has been, nor can you flatter yourſelf his Lordſhip will prove ſo wholly influenced by diſintereſted ſentiments as to remain contentedly ignorant of your ſituation reſpecting pecuniary matters. His interference would effectually blow up the whole ſcheme; and if your point is not ſettled paſt redemption before his return, you may hang yourſelf on the firſt willow you meet with between London and Coventry.

I can't help laughing at the difficulties you muſt have to encounter in courting your fair one under the eye of your old flame Jenny Parſons. This untoward circumſtance muſt throw a conſtraint over your behaviour and addreſs, by

no

no means favourable to your deſire of pleaſing: yet to have fulfilled your engagements in that quarter muſt have proved unmitigated ruin to both; and ſhe is ſo ſoft, poor gentle ſoul, that if ever a deſerted miſtreſs was to be truſted where retaliation was in her power, I dare ſay Miſs Parſons might be the woman. Conſider it entirely reſts with her to overturn the whole machine of your ingenious ſcheme. You tell me you have been ſo prudent that you are convinced ſhe does not even ſuſpect your intentions; and that your management could not have been diſcernible even to the eye of jealouſy. Remember, however, that revenge is a ruling paſſion in the ſex; nor are they ever to be truſted where offended pride muſt ſtimulate to vengeance.

Heartily wiſhing you all the ſucceſs you can wiſh, and requeſting to be immediately made acquainted with it, I conclude, with my caution, as above; and remain, dear Wilmot,

wholly your's,

F. HARLOW.

You may eaſily judge how confounded Fanny muſt be to perceive by this letter, ſo wonderfully preſented to her knowledge, that with all his timidity and diffident deſire of ingratiating himſelf, Wilmot regarded his ſolicitations as certain of ſucceſs, and had communicated his expectations to his friend with all the vanity of a man who did not allow himſelf even to doubt.

I was employed laſt night pretty late, and was ſtill reading in my dreſſing room, when my ſiſter, who I concluded was gone to bed, flew to me with the epiſtle in her hand, with a countenance

tenance as pale as death, in which mortification, anger, and aſtoniſhment were ſtrongly painted. She informed me of the accident; and as tears are a relief which Fanny has ever at hand, her gentle diſpoſition allowing of no other vent to her indignation, ſhe could not help crying from vexation, while ſhe entreated me to read it.

The part of it, however, which provoked her moſt, was that humiliating ſentence where Wilmot appears to have boaſted to his correſpondent that ſhe had been very *eaſily melted to compliance*, a phraſe that ſeverely wounded her pride. You ſee, cried ſhe, he has never once mentioned me. I dare ſay he never thought about me. 'Tis my fortune alone about which he is ſo anxious. No doubt it would have been of ſome ſervice in advancing him in his profeſſion; but God knows, had he been informed how matters ſtand, he never would have paid me his addreſſes on account of an advantage which no longer exiſts, and he is both weak and vain if he concludes I have been ſo *eaſily melted* as he flattered himſelf, or that I have liſtened with pleaſure to ſolicitations which have fatigued and tormented me ever ſince our reſidence in this houſe.

Solicitations, Fanny, cried I; I never knew till this moment that Wilmot had made any advances that could go under the name of ſolicitations. Strange indeed, if I have continued thus long ignorant of any part of his behaviour, yet certain I am you have never once hinted to me any thing which could be conſtrued into that meaning.

Oh! my dear Hermione! exclaimed ſhe, burſting into a freſh flood of tears, I will tell you all.

All!

All! cried I, terrified at the expreſſion, what is the *all* of which you are to inform me? for indeed I ſuſpected ſome frightful imprudence from the agitation in which I beheld her.

She could not, however, immediately relieve my fears, and tears of mortification choaked her utterance.

Oh! cried ſhe at length, how can I tell you; you, that are older and ſo much wiſer than I, you will think meanly of me, and I would ſooner loſe the good opinion of the whole world than be deſpiſed by you.

My deareſt Fanny, ſaid I in the tendereſt accents, you may aſſure yourſelf that is impoſſible. My knowledge of your heart muſt ever conceal and extenuate all your little errors, and it is unkind in you to imagine that mine could for an inſtant harbour a ſentiment ſo injurious of which you were the object.

She then confeſſed to me that about ten days ago Wilmot had declared his paſſion in the warmeſt and moſt affecting terms; and though I did not love him, cried ſhe, at leaſt I am certain it gave me no pain to reject him on my own account, yet I could not be wholly unmoved at prayers and entreaties which ſeemed the reſult of the moſt ardent affection; an affection, repeated ſhe, which I now plainly perceive my fortune alone inſpired. All however that he deſired, remitting his hopes of ſucceſs to time and aſſiduity, was that you, whom he apprehended and whom I well knew not to be in his intereſt, ſhould not for ſome time be made acquainted with his propoſals; and to this requeſt, ſoftened by his apparent diſtreſs, I was weak enough unwillingly to conſent; though it ſhocked me extremely that you, who are my only

only friend and adviſer, and to whom every thought of my heart has ever been known, ſhould continue ignorant of an affair which but for this fortunate diſcovery might have intereſted it too much.

As ſhe finiſhed ſpeaking, ſhe ſobbed on my boſom moſt bitterly. You may believe I embraced and ſoothed her tenderly. But tell me, my dear, ſaid I what further lengths you have been prevailed with to go. There are no engagements in the caſe I hope.

No, thank God, cried ſhe, though heaven knows how I have been perſecuted and tormented, not only by Wilmot himſelf but by Mrs. Hindon, who has warmly eſpouſed his cauſe and privately pleaded his paſſion on every occaſion when ſhe could get me by myſelf; and not having my beloved Hermione to direct me, for they both kept me ſteadily to my raſh promiſe of ſecrecy, though I often deſired permiſſion to diſcloſe this affair to you, into what an abyſs of miſery might I not have been plunged from my folly and inexperience; bewildered by Mrs. Hindon's partial repreſentation of this imprudent ſtep, and ſoftened by the continual aſſiduities and deſpair of a man who ſeemed to adore me.

Artful wretches! can I give them, Sophia, a milder appellation? What a plan was here to entrap my amiable, innocent, unſuſpecting Fanny? And becauſe my eyes were ſuppoſed to be open to the thouſand objections againſt a match, in favour of which not one ſingle advantage can be preſented, I was to be kept out of the ſecret till too late effectually to interfere; whilſt my dear and only ſiſter was to prove a victim to the need and prodigality of the one,

and

and to the abſurd and deſtructive vanity of the other.

What a deſpicable character does this letter plainly prove Wilmot's to be! I am amazed, on looking back, that the whole affair did not occur to my ſuſpicion. But the art of the one, and the low cunning of the other, added to my truſt in Fanny's confidence in my advice, all conſpired to deceive me. You ſee too, there is a hint of a previous engagement. Poor Miſs Parſons! her dejection and depreſſion are now fully accounted for. How hard has been her fate! Deprived of her parents at a period of life when the feelings are moſt acutely ſenſible to the ſhafts of misfortune, conſtrained to endure a haughty and indelicate dependance, her affections and her pride had yet a wound more painful to receive, a ſting more corroding to undergo. Her ſufferings, and her patient forbearance of complaint, endear her to me in the moſt affecting point of view, and I ſhall now more anxiouſly than ever exert myſelf to ſoften her anguiſh, by every kindneſs and attention in my power to beſtow.

As to my dear Fanny, though this providential diſcovery produced a temporary mortification, and drew ſome tears of vexation from her eyes, her heart, ſlightly if at all touched, had nothing deeply to hurt or painfully to intereſt it; and as ſhe was thoroughly ſenſible of the riſques from which ſhe had juſt eſcaped, ſhe beheld with horror the precipice on which ſhe had been ſtanding, and required not either argument or perſuaſion (though by way of caution I beſtowed both very laviſhly) to convince her how fortunate this accident had proved. Her innocent mind, unacquainted with diſguiſe and

unuſed to concealment, felt relieved of a painful weight by the confeſſion which her firſt agitation had extorted from her; yet I had no little difficulty in reconciling her to herſelf on account of having forfeited her promiſe, which indeed ſhe had falſified almoſt unconſciouſly in the height of her emotions.

Since I have done ſo, ſaid ſhe, though I think I have been to blame, do not expoſe me to Mrs. Hindon. Diſhonourably as ſhe has acted towards me, I ought not to have receded from the promiſe I gave. I ought indeed to have poſſeſſed both ſenſe and reſolution ſufficient for acting without counſel; but you may reſt aſſured never, never ſhall I riſque my peace by granting another promiſe to the ſame purport. I have ſuffered too ſeverely from this ill judged concealment, and ſhall take the firſt opportunity of informing Mrs. Hindon that I am determined in my reſolution never again to liſten to her nephew on the ſubject of his paſſion—never indeed ſhall he have an opportunity of tormenting me more.

To calm her, I gave her my word I ſhould not mention one ſyllable of the matter to Mrs. Hindon. Yet I was ſomewhat at a loſs how to proceed. To apply to Mr. Howard, was to hazard engaging him in a quarrel with his ſiſter in law; nor could I myſelf reſent her behaviour while we were partaking of her civilities. I reſolved therefore to be ſilent on the ſubject; and by never quitting Fanny's ſide, who herſelf wiſhed to avoid any intercouſe with Wilmot, ſo to regulate her manner in future as entirely to deſtroy the hopes to which his vanity and her imprudence had given riſe. Yet I could hardly

hardly talk to the artful woman this morning at breakfaſt with any degree of temper.

FEB. 14.

Sir Edward ſpent yeſterday evening here; and really grows ſo very particular, both in his attentions and converſation, that I begin to feel the neceſſity of a reſerve, which his modeſty and the obligations I owe him, render very unpleaſant. Adieu! my Sophia. I have juſt received your delightful packet. Ah my love! are there no hopes, now you are ſo near as Paris, that your father may be prevailed with to pay England a viſit? Oh that I were with you to ſolicit this favour on my knees.

H. SEYMOUR.

LETTER XII.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

FEB. 15.

WELL, Sophia, our doom is at laſt determined. My grandfather's anſwer is arrived. Yet not addreſſed to us: that would have been a condeſcenſion too great. He has not even deigned to acknowledge my letter; but has ordered Lady Linroſe to inform us. But let her Ladyſhip's letter ſpeak for itſelf.

TO LAURENCE HOWARD, ESQ.

SIR,

I was this day favoured with an anſwer from Nice, and I delay not a moment in acquainting you with the reſult of your application, although I am extremely ſorry to premiſe that it is not of a nature that can either prove agreeable to your own wiſhes or to thoſe of the young ladies committed to your charge.

In ſpite of the indefatigable trouble I have taken, and the perſuaſive arguments I have uſed in more than one letter, to repreſent their ſituation in a light the moſt diſmal and affecting, his Lordſhip remains quite inexorable to all my entreaties. He tells me that the revival of recollections ſo bitter, as this ſubject recalls to his memory, has given a mortal ſtab to that repoſe which time had in ſome meaſure reſtored, and he deſires, as he is not at liberty himſelf to addreſs the ladies, that through the medium of my pen they may be informed, that when the conduct of their unhappy parent forced him to renounce him, he bound himſelf by a ſolemn reſolution it ſhould be for ever; nor that any conſideration ſhould prevail on him through life, to ſee, countenance, or hold the ſlighteſt intercourſe with the offspring of a calamity which has loaded his days with mortification and miſery. His Lordſhip concludes by laying his commands upon me, under pain of his perpetual diſpleaſure, ſtrictly to obſerve a ſimilar conduct, and expreſſes himſelf with a firmneſs and force which conſtrains me, with all the diſpoſition imaginable to ſerve the young ladies, to give up all thoughts of making myſelf or family known

to

to them. I hope therefore, after this diſagreeable information, which with infinite pain to myſelf I am obliged to divulge, they will neither be ſurpriſed nor offended when I acknowledge that a firm adherence to Lord Belmont's prohibition is the unavoidable conſequence of its having been made known; and that I think myſelf obliged, after requeſting the favour of one line more on this ſubject, to decline even all further correſpondence upon it.

As I cannot but feel warmly intereſted in two young perſons, who ſuffer ſo unfortunately for errors for which in ſtrict juſtice they cannot be eſteemed accountable, I was extremely happy, Sir, to underſtand from you, that your wards laboured under no difficulties in regard to fortune. I take it for granted therefore that they poſſeſs that ſum which Lord Linroſe received from the generoſity of his father, and which I know was reckoned a very noble ſtipulation in Lord Belmont to grant after a conduct ſo weak, diſhonourable, and irritating to all his friends. Had any pecuniary aſſiſtance been required, I ſhould certainly have riſqued my Lord's diſpleaſure by contributing from my own private purſe what might have been of ſervice for their eaſe and comfort; but as this is by no means neceſſary, and the ladies are in poſſeſſion of an affluence which allows them to purſue what plan of life they chuſe, and to ſettle wherever they may incline, if I might be allowed to interfere with my advice on this head, I would take the liberty of ſuggeſting that France, which may in a manner be called their native country, muſt to them undoubtedly prove a more eligible, as well as a more agreeable reſidence than England is ever likely to become. A hint muſt convince

convince them that where the ſtain of their father's faults is unknown they certainly enjoy a better chance of being reſpected, than where remembrance muſt ever ſubject them to the impertinence of curioſity, and perhaps, however unjuſtly, to unmerited contempt.

I approve highly of the modeſty and prudence they have teſtified in not aſſuming a name, the renunciation of which was the conſequence of family diſhonour; and I make no doubt they will equally ſupport their claim to thoſe virtues in future, by carefully concealing their title to it. Any attempt to the contrary would but produce the diſagreeable effect of renewing the recollection of a fate which muſt diſcredit it, and never can be of ſervice to them in the world's opinion, and which, from the great length of time that has elapſed ſince thoſe circumſtances engaged in ſo great a degree the public attention, is now wholly ſunk into oblivion.

I ſhould be happy, Sir, to learn, if you would for once favour me with a line for that purpoſe, what the determination of your wards is likely to be; though after this communication I am unwillingly conſtrained to aſk no farther, compaſſion compels me to be anxiouſly ſolicitous in regard to the fate of two young perſons, whom, in ſpite of the reſtrictions which paternal authority impoſes, I ſhall ever conſider as nearly allied to my family.

I remain, with eſteem, Sir, your moſt obedient ſervant,

CAROLINE LINROSE.

Well, Sophia, what do you think of this letter? All our abſurd and romantic hopes, hitherto

thereto ſupported by the chimeras of a ſanguine and deluſive imagination, are at one blow finally cruſhed. No redreſs you find. A ſolemn reſolution deprives us even of a flattering poſſibility that Lord Belmont, (alas! I dare not give him the tender appellation of grandfather,) may allow nature and compaſſion to plead for us in his boſom. He forbids our claims, denies our title to his protection, and breaks with us for ever. Oh! my Sophia, my dear and only friend! our hearts are deeply wounded by this ſtroke. Fanny and I have been weeping the loſs of our laſt parent in each other's arms; and on this occaſion I have been faithfully acting up to the encomium once beſtowed on me, of inſtilling conſolation at a moment when I could not myſelf imbibe comfort from my own arguments.

We were ſitting at table with ſome company after dinner, when this cruel letter was put into Mr. Howard's hands. He aſked leave to break the ſeal; and upon haſtily peruſing the firſt lines, changed colour and left the room. My apprehenſions inſtantly told me from whence it came, and what were the contents; yet I kept my ſeat in ſeeming compoſure till Mrs. Hindon withdrew with the ladies to the drawing room.

My impatience then left me no longer reſolution to remain in this anxious inquietude; and unwilling to make Fanny a ſharer in my uneaſineſs, I ſtole ſoftly to Mr. Hindon's ſtudy, where I concluded Mr. Howard would be, and tapping at the door, aſked permiſſion to enter. He opened it immediately. The diſappointment which your countenance cannot conceal, ſaid I, too evidently explains all I want to know.

Preſſing my hand—Here is the letter, anſwered

ſwered he. I can ſay nothing to mitigate its unwelcome contents. Yet what boſom can boaſt ſuperior fortitude to Miſs Seymour's, whoſe mind ſuggeſts more powerful and alleviating conſolations for a misfortune in which neither imprudence nor miſconduct involves her! He then gave me the letter, and walked up ſtairs to ſend Fanny down to receive the news.

She found me drowned in tears, which this complete diſappointment to all our hopes could not but at firſt produce: but ſoon that mixture of indelicacy and pretended compaſſion which the letter contained, by exciting my reſentment fortified my ſpirits. Narrow-minded woman! Does ſhe ſuppoſe all the world influenced by ſentiments of equal meanneſs with her own? does ſhe conclude that reproach and contempt muſt be our portion, becauſe our parent erred and was unhappy? He ſuffered, alas, ſufficiently for his faults, without entailing their miſerable conſequences on his offspring, and heaven I truſt has accepted the tribute of his remorſe.

Pecuniary aſſiſtance; oh! may it pleaſe a wiſe and gracious Providence to avert a calamity ſo inſupportable, ſo degrading as dependence on Lady Linroſe would prove. Rather, my Sophia, let us owe the mere neceſſaries of exiſtence to the honeſt labour of our hands. Ah! rake not up the aſhes of the dead! Cruel woman; why does ſhe write with a ſhew of ſympathy ſhe feels not, and of pity which borders on inſult, while ſuch bitter expreſſions drop from her pen, (expreſſions which ſhe well knew muſt recall the moſt diſtreſſing reflections) for errors that long ſince were expiated and forgiven.

Poor

Poor Fanny's ſanguine expectations were ſo cruelly daſhed, and her ſpirits, ſo ſunk by this blow, that I found it doubly incumbent on me to exert my own in order to ſupport hers. I reflected that this diſappointment, as ſuggeſted by Mr. Howard, was not the conſequence either of our folly or our faults: it was an event I had ever believed poſſible, and often feared was probable, nor could it ever have depended on our own conduct to have averted or eſcaped it. Pride intermixed itſelf in many motives of conſolation; and in ſuch circumſtances the aſſiſtance of that ſentiment (in many caſes the error of our nature) is perhaps the moſt ſalutary ſource from which comfort can flow.

My grandfather's vow, (for ſtill will I call him ſo) if it cannot be recalled, yet ſurely extends not to Lady Linroſe. Were ſhe poſſeſſed of a mind noble and enlarged; were it not ſelfiſh, little, and intereſted, never would ſhe have given implicit obedience to a meaſure ſo unfeeling and unjuſt as that of renouncing two friendleſs girls, in a foreign country, where they have no claims for kindneſs or protection except on thoſe whom benevolence and humanity induce to be the friends of the unfortunate.

Mr. Howard ſoon joined us. I was quite compoſed when he entered, and aſſiſted his arguments ſo effectually, that Fanny became at length more compoſed; we remained together a conſiderable time in converſation; till at length we were interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Hindon.

Good ſtars! in tears, my dear ladies, cried ſhe. What on earth can be the matter? for God's ſake tell me what has diſtreſſed you in this manner? Brother, what can it be?

On being informed—God Almighty! cried ſhe, renounce you! Lord Belmont renounce you! What on earth will then become of you, for to my certain knowledge you will never ſee one ſhilling of the money that was lodged in Mr. Benſeley's hands.

Pardon me, Madam, cried Mr. Howard with evident diſpleaſure, I hope part of it will certainly be recovered.

Part of it—what perhaps one paltry thouſand, or it may be two, out of the twenty-four. That's part of it with a vengeance. What will two thouſand be to them, who have been accuſtomed to want for nothing, and to have things always handſome and genteel about them? Indeed it is moſt deplorable. But, pray, Miſs Seymour, if you was yourſelf to write to Lady Linroſe, for you know you are extremely clever at your pen, and was to repreſent your deſtitute condition in the moſt moving terms, don't you think ſhe might be prevailed on to intercede with Lord Belmont to allow you ſomething yearly, or in caſe that failed to grant it herſelf?

Not for a thouſand worlds! cried I. If our affairs are in this diſmal ſituation, we muſt accuſtom ourſelves to conform to our finances. It is a duty to live within the limits of what one poſſeſſes; the diſcharge of which is I think as eſſential as that of almoſt any other. To apply to any of our family after this renunciation, is what I never will for an inſtant think of.

And why not pray? cried ſhe. Fine talking indeed, of living like ſcrubs on fifty pounds a year, after having been brought up to forty times that ſum, when a ſtep ſo natural and ſimple might beſtow affluence and comfort inſtead of penury and want. Tis nothing but pride, mere

mere pride, which prevents you from following my advice, and indeed you muſt allow me to tell you ſo; beſides, as you have ſuch certain proofs by which to aſcertain your birth, if you make but buſtle enough, I dare ſay his Lordſhip will be glad to compound matters from the dread of your reviving the old ſtory by going to law with him; or if he won't be brought to hear reaſon, what do you think of actually commencing a proceſs? I'll warrant the bare idea of ſuch a proceding will bring him to act as he ought to do. What ſay you, brother, to the ſcheme?

I would rather ſtarve, cried I with a warmth which her indelicacy made irrepreſſible.

Starve! Fine talking to be ſure. I'll wager Mr. Howard agrees with me, if people won't be perſuaded to behave properly, why they muſt be compelled to it if poſſible.

I cannot agree with you in this meaſure, indeed Madam, ſaid Mr. Howard, who ſeemed to have been loſt in thought ever ſince her entrance, for I cannot poſſibly conceive what advantage could reſult from Lord Belmont's being conſtrained to acknowledge his grandchildren: but it is impoſſible immediately to determine what ſteps ought to be purſued.

Oh to be ſure one ought to conſider certainly, and I make no doubt you will agree with me in opinion that ſome ſort of application ought immediately to be made to Lady Elmore. But I have left my company below. Will you make your appearance ladies? or if you are not ſufficiently compoſed I ſhall ſend up Jenny with tea, for Lady Farnford and her daughter are juſt come in and will be ſurpriſed at my abſence.

She

She then left us: and I beſought Mr. Howard no longer to conceal any circumſtances relating to our affairs, which it was neceſſary we ſhould be made acquainted with. Mrs. Hindon's information is but too true, I perceive, added I; but on what we poſſeſs we muſt contrive to ſubſiſt, and you need not be afraid to confeſs the worſt, for this diſappointment to my hopes has inured me to mortification.

I muſt acknowledge, anſwered he, that I am afraid Mrs. Hindon has authority but too good for the abrupt diſcovery ſhe has made of your affairs. As I flattered myſelf that pecuniary misfortunes would neither have been felt nor regarded while you enjoyed the affection and protection of Lord Belmont, I wiſhed not to diſturb you with the apprehenſion of an evil which might never arrive; but ſorry I am to confeſs the claims of Mr. Benſeley's creditors are become ſo great, that it is much to be feared your fortune will be reduced to pretty near what Mrs. Hindon mentioned—two thouſand pounds, or about that ſum. There is no ſaying however how things may turn out, as nothing is yet ſettled; but I wiſh not to flatter you, while I obſerve and admire that fortitude and ſtrength of mind that riſes ſuperior to diſappointments under which the bulk of mankind would ſink into deſpondency.

Well, my dear Sir, cried I, there is no help for this misfortune. Thank heaven a little yet remains. We muſt immediately think of ſome private abode, where we may live peaceably and tranquilly, no longer agitated with the wiſhes nor tormented by the expectations which have kept our minds ever ſince we left Languedoc in a ſtate of tumult and ſuſpenſe. All expectation

tation is at an end; for we have nothing now to hope, but may enjoy enough out of the wreck of our fortune to exiſt with decency and comfort in obſcurity. What is it but returning to a retirement that experience has convinced us we are capable of enjoying, and that habit and education have both conſpired to render even agreeable to us? We ſhall ſoon forget this buſy æra of our lives, or regard it but as an uneaſy, troubleſome dream, which we ſhall be delighted to find has vaniſhed away.

Upon you, my dear Sir, continued I, who have ſo faithfully and conſcientiouſly fulfilled the fatiguing and diſagreeable charge impoſed on you by my dear father, we muſt ſtill lean for further direction and aſſiſtance. Your goodneſs and zeal muſt expect ſtill further trouble in ſeeking out for us ſome humble reſidence. Our abode muſt be as ſimple as is conſiſtent with neatneſs and decency, in ſome retired ſpot in a cheap country.

And would you have the barbarity to exclude me from your dwelling, cried he, with a ſudden eagerneſs which he ſeemed incapable of repreſſing, but which, as if conſcious of having gone too far, he inſtantly checked, and added in a ſoftened tone though with viſible emotion, will my dear and amiable wards allow me as their guardian, warmly intereſted in their happineſs, to propoſe a ſcheme—a ſcheme, repeated he heſitating, which I have been for ſome time revolving in my mind leſt things ſhould take this unfavourable turn. It is indeed a plan which no other circumſtances could have juſtified——and even now requires—But I ſhall lay hold of ſome other opportunity of preſenting it to your conſideration,

ſideration, when I have more clearly weighed it and conſidered its conſequences.

Oh tell it us now, my dear Sir, cried Fanny with impatience. What would become of us if we had not ſo good, ſo kind, and ſo able a friend to adviſe us!

Mr. Howard, affected at theſe words, could hardly diſperſe a tear which ruſhed into his eye, and unable to anſwer, took advantage of Miſs Parſons entering to leave us haſtily. The ſoftneſs of that amiable girl's nature made Fanny's apparent grief infectious; and without uttering a ſyllable, ſhe gave way to a ſudden burſt of tears; which tender ſympathy, had I not been before prepoſſeſſed in her favour, would alone have endeared her to me. I was obliged to become her comforter likewiſe; and aſſured her we were weeping a diſappointment, not a calamity; and indulging in tears, which after the firſt ſhock it was weakneſs to allow to flow, and therefore merited not the kind compaſſion they had excited.

I was not a little ſurpriſed to diſcover that ſhe was perfectly informed not only of the ſubject of our preſent diſtreſs but with every circumſtance relating to our preſent ſituation, which ſhe told us Mrs. Hindon, oppreſſed with the ſecret, had been ſo eager to divulge, that not only herſelf, but Lady Farnford and ſeveral of her friends below had been already partakers of it.

Mrs. Hindon muſt look upon her word as nothing, ſaid I, for ſhe promiſed ſecrecy.

Ah, Madam, if you knew all, cried ſhe, and ſhook her head emphatically—and indeed I have more than once thought of mentioning it to you; but as I ſaw little danger of your being led into difficulties, and beheld you poſſeſſed of

prudence ſufficient to ſecure you from danger, I thought it needleſs to hazard my aunt's diſpleaſure, ſhould my conduct ever have become ſuſpected.

You mean with regard to Captain Wilmot, cried Fanny; but thank God the diſcovery you hint at has been already made, time enough to prevent any ill conſequences from his duplicity. Indeed had his fortune been ſplendid to my wiſh, and his affection as ſincere as I believe it pretended, to pity alone, not attachment, would he have owed the ſucceſs which Mrs. Hindon's artful repreſentations and my ſimple inexperience might perhaps have led me to beſtow.

I am afraid indeed, Madam, anſwered ſhe, that my couſin merits not the honour of your good opinion. But as to that plan, though I have long ſuſpected it I never once dreamt of interfering, as I concluded till this moment it had not only the approbation of your own heart, but likewiſe of Miſs Seymour's judgment.

Far from it indeed, cried I. My opinion of Captain Wilmot has ever been ſuch, that independent of the embarraſſment of his fortune, this ſtep never ſhould have received my concurrence while I knew my ſiſter's heart was not deeply intereſted.

You amaze me, Madam, for indeed Mrs. Hindon long ſince gave me to underſtand that it was a match where no material objections on either ſide could poſſibly be oppoſed to obſtruct its progreſs.

Mrs. Hindon then ſpoke from her wiſhes, not her conviction, for from the beginning I am convinced ſhe dreaded its ſucceſs.

Well, Madam, ſaid Miſs Parſons, I heartily congratulate you on having eſcaped the ſnare; for

for it is a ſecret to few that Captain Wilmot, from a deſtructive paſſion for play, has mortgaged his eſtate, at no time conſiderable, to very near its full value, and if he has not already wholly ruined himſelf, his extravagance, unſubdued by experience, ſufficiently proves that ſuch a termination muſt ſoon take place. But on this head having received falſe intelligence, I concluded you acted from the dictates of affection; an idea which was ſufficient to deter me from interfering by an explanation that might have been but indifferently received, and which at all events I could not have been juſtified for bringing to light.

I thought, cried I, you had begun by indirectly propoſing to reveal all. If ſecrecy was your determined reſolution how was this in your power?

I meant all that concerned you, Madam, not what regarded your ſiſter. Of her affairs I was informed, and in divulging my couſin's real ſituation, from the charges of treachery, however innocent my intention and however beneficial the conſequences, I could not have been wholly exculpated, while confidence alone had put it in my power to betray.

Miſs Parſons then haſtened to inform us, that on the very evening which ſucceeded that of our arrival in England, Mr. Howard having on his viſit to his brother and ſiſter diſcloſed our ſituation, and acquainted them with our real name and ſplendid connection under the tie of ſecrecy, and likewiſe with the amount of our fortune, Mrs. Hindon ſeized the earlieſt opportunity of making a confidante of her friend Lady Farniford.

The two ladies were ſeated in Mrs. Hindon's

don's dreſſing-room, which is merely divided by a thin partition from the apartment we at preſent occupy, and which was then inhabited by Miſs Parſons. She happened to be quietly placed at her book, when her ſtudies were interrupted by the converſation of the next room, and her attention ſo unavoidably attracted by the eager vociferation of this confidential tete a tete, that contrary either to her inclination or deſign, ſhe found herſelf in poſſeſſion of all their ſecrets.

The two friends, after pondering, wondering, and goſſiping, began to reflect that with ten thouſand in poſſeſſion, and at leaſt double that ſum in expectation, with the advantages of a ſplendid family connection, Fanny and I preſented no inconſiderable gratification to the avarice or vanity of any needy pretenders.

From theſe particulars they ſoon began to form wiſhes that prizes ſo conſiderable could be ſecured to their own families, by means of whatever males of their houſe ſhould be matrimonially diſpoſed: and Captain Wilmot, the nephew of the one, and Farnford, the ſon of the other, inſtantly occurred to the active and fertile imaginations of theſe buſy intermeddling old women. Thoſe two gentlemen, in whom the ladies felt a mutual intereſt, were at once indigent and extravagant, good looking and ſhowy, circumſtances which rendered the ſucceſs of their ſchemes both eſſential and probable. They reſolved however carefully to conceal their plan till ripe for execution; doubting not but occaſional meetings and frequent intercourſe would gradually facilitate its progreſs and inſure it a fortunate concluſion. It was in conſequence of this that you two ladies were

entreated

entreated with a display ſo oſtentatious of hoſpitable civility to take up your abode in Mrs. Hindon's family.

Fanny and I both warmly thanked Miſs Parſons for this information, dictated by the keenneſs of her feelings and by that gratitude which a little kindneſs and a few trivial attentions had excited: attentions that no delicate mind could have withheld teſtifying even for a perſon leſs amiable, in a ſituation ſo humiliating as hers.

Good heavens! cried I, and was I too the object of a project? We have undoubtedly made a ſufficient return to Mrs. Hindon for all her civilities in furniſhing ſuch amuſing and intereſting ſubjects for her active ſpirit to work on. I think, however, as our fortune was the ſecret ſpring of all theſe intrigues, we have little reaſon now to apprehend either art or contrivances. The primary motive for all theſe ſpeculations has vaniſhed, and I ſhrewdly ſuſpect the unconquerable and violent paſſion which has occaſioned ſuch ravages in the boſoms of the two gentlemen, being deprived of this nouriſhment, will quietly ſink into neglect and indifference; the only advantage it muſt be confeſſed that reſults from this change in our proſpects.

This intelligence at another time might have occaſioned me uneaſineſs; but at the moment it was communicated the information was attended by a number of others ſo much more diſtreſſing, that I hardly gave it any attention. It only encreaſed the diſlike which reſentment at Mrs. Hindon's behaviour with regard to Fanny had before excited, and which, as this clue to her conduct deprived her even of the merit her hoſpitality

hoſpitality and civilities had before claimed, now almoſt amounted to repugnance and contempt.

The motive of her advice, indelicate and unfeeling, to apply to Lady Linroſe, not merely for her mediation but even for her aſſiſtance, is now fully explained, as alſo the ſecret cauſe of that frigid chagrin too potent either for concealment or repreſſion, which diffuſed itſelf over both her manner and countenance on receiving the news of our cruel diſappointment.

Perhaps I am a little ſevere in my expreſſions: for after all, her diſappointment, poor woman, might prove little inferior to ours. Her deſigns and expectations are compleatly fruſtrated by the ſame unlucky event that puts ours to flight; and perhaps in ſome minds the deſires ſuggeſted by pride are as powerful as thoſe which reaſon, nature, and feeling excite. To loſe the hopes of an alliance that flatters her vanity, may to Mrs. Hindon prove a blow as ſevere as the ſhock which deprives us at once of a parent and the pleaſing comforts of family connections.

LETTER XIII.

TO MISS BEAUMONT.

FEB. 15, TWELVE AT NIGHT.

MRS. Hindon's company not having left her till late, I had ſome hours leiſure to purſue my journal. We then went down to ſupper, which proved a dull and comfortleſs repaſt.

Mrs.

Mrs. Hindon was cold and out of humour; her husband sleepy and fatigued, Fanny dejected, Mr. Howard thoughtful, and for myself I was grave and silent. Miss Jenny was indeed the only person in company who retained her usual behaviour; at all times soft, humble, and melancholy.

The change our situation had undergone in the eyes of Mrs. Hindon since the morning shone conspicuous in her manner, and produced an alteration hardly to be credited. That flattering civility, bordering often almost upon servility, those professions of unalterable esteem, friendship, and regard, that used sometimes, from our utter inability to make adequate returns, absolutely to overpower us, were this evening converted into frigid reserve, mixed with a displeasure which seemed to avow that she could hardly forgive herself for having hitherto lavished upon us so much unnecessary respect and attention, and for which mortification she meant to indemnify herself in the season of our humiliation, by making all proper reprisals. Poor woman! she is infinitely mistaken if she imagines I am in the least humbled by this reverse. It is not, thank heaven, in the power of fortune to produce an effect so degrading on my mind. I looked down on her with a degree of pity which softened my contempt, on witnessing the littleness of mind her conduct betrayed.

We were not long in separating for the night: and as I have too much anxiety on my spirits to hope for rest, here am I retired to pass an hour in chat with my dearest Sophia, while poor Fanny is forgetting the busy occurrences of this

this diſagreeable day in the ſoothing arms of ſleep.

Amidſt all the difficulties and mortifications we have encountered, and which at our time of life, when the feelings are all tremblingly alive and the paſſions eager and unſubdued, are endured with double anguiſh, how alleviating, how grateful to my heart is the conviction of my beloved Sophia's never failing ſympathy and affection! There yet remains to us heaven's firſt and choiceſt bleſſing—a dear and tender friend, who feels for our embarraſſments and enters into all our diſtreſſes with the kindeſt intereſt and warmeſt commiſeration. Oh! my Sophia! ought I then to complain?

Yet, yet, my dear, I indeed require your friendly ſympathy; for at this inſtant, without labouring, thank God, under an heavy affliction, (for in my opinion to the ſtings of guilt, or to the heart-rending deſpair of loſing a friend tried and beloved, alone belongs that expreſſion), our ſituation is as comfortleſs, as diſagreeable as poſſible. How are we to diſpoſe of ourſelves? Mrs. Hindon's houſe is no longer a reſidence for us. You will eaſily perceive the neceſſity of our quitting it in all haſte; and I make no doubt may likewiſe conjecture, that after the vexatious adventure into which our reſidence in lodgings ſo lately involved us, I muſt feel no ſmall degree of reluctance at the idea of venturing into others, without the protection of Mr. Howard, whoſe attendance muſt now of courſe ceaſe, when the title, though merely nominal, of our guardian is at an end; neither can I think without repugnance of remaining in town, cooped up in ſmall, confined, unwholeſome apartments, and of ſuch only will

our

our finances allow; while a neat ruſtic habitation in the country can be procured perhaps at leſs expence.

Another motive no leſs powerful, conſpires to give additional force to my deſire of leaving London as ſoon as convenience will permit, and ſettling as far from it as poſſible; I will confeſs my vanity, for ſurely it is a natural pride—I cannot think of being recognized by Mr. Roatſley, after this change in our appearance, without pain. Were he like Mrs. Hindon, to diſcover by his behaviour that from our apparent fall we were ſunk in his eſtimation, I ſhould with eaſe caſt him from my heart for ever: but of this mean weakneſs, incident only to common minds, I cannot ſuſpect him. I fear only to be the object of his pity! Oh! Sophia! pity from Roatſley would mortify me more ſeverely than unmerited contempt from the reſt of the world.

How few are there who do not allow themſelves, perhaps unconſciouſly, to be more influenced by appearances than they ſuſpect? Miſs Seymour, while moving in a ſphere, if not ſplendid at leaſt creditable, is no longer the ſame perſon when reduced to exiſt only through the efforts of her own induſtry; and though ſtill entitled to the reſpect of the unprejudiced, nay perhaps to their eſteem, yet being ſunk to her intrinſic value, and deprived of a thouſand little adventitious circumſtances that can give life and alacrity to an infant paſſion, how can it be ſuppoſed to combat and ſtruggle againſt thoſe dangerous mortifications which are the greateſt foes to its progreſs?

No, Sophia, I ſincerely hope I ſhall ſee him no more. To you, I divulge every thought

that

that oppreſſes my heart, for from your ſympathy alone I can hope to derive the ſlighteſt alleviation. To you then, my dear, I will acknowledge, that the ſevereſt wound my grandfather's renunciation has inflicted, is its having awakened me from a pleaſing deluſive dream, on the idea of which I have almoſt exiſted ever ſince I overheard Roatſley's acknowledgment to his friend of his partiality in my favour. I confeſs it was weak, it was unpardonable, to allow my mind to indulge in ſuch reveries; yet they ſtole on me imperceptibly, and I could not reſiſt giving way to the flattering hopes, that had he beheld me in that advantageous point of view, in which rank and fortune ever place their votaries, had he ſeen me in the circle to which my birth entitles me—in ſhort, my dear, as we live not in the age of romance, where the ſplendors of life are wholly diſregarded, it is probable his riſing attachment would not have been greatly damped by the knowledge of my being Lord Belmont's grandchild, and poſſeſſed of a conſiderable fortune. Had this been the *ſole* motive, or even the *chief* one, little ſhould I have prized the flame: but remember he loved me when theſe particulars were unknown, and laboured for my welfare when a veil of doubtful obſcurity was thrown over my ſituation. Theſe are circumſtances to give weight and value to his paſſion. But theſe chimeras are now no more. I muſt drive them from my thoughts for ever; and inſtead of confeſſing and indulging, check and conquer them with all the fortitude I can ſummon to my aſſiſtance.

Going

FEB. 16.

Going down this morning to breakfaſt, I was ſurpriſed when I entered to find Lady Farnford and Mrs. Hindon tete a tete, and ſeemingly in earneſt converſation. Good morning, Miſs Seymour, cried the latter with a ſmiling air, the traces of laſt night's hauteur being entirely vaniſhed from her brow. Lady Farnford likewiſe accoſted me with abundance of civility and kindneſs, and they inſiſted on placing me between them.

Come, cried Mrs. Hindon, after a ſhort pauſe, which ſhe appeared to have employed in conſidering how ſhe could introduce without abruptneſs what ſhe intended to ſay—Why ſhould there be ſuch diſtance among friends? To tell the plain truth, Miſs Seymour, I could not ſhut my eyes all night for thinking in what a deſtitute and diſmal way you and Miſs Fanny muſt live if you are not ruled and perſuaded by thoſe who are intereſted in you. Here is Lady Farnford, who declares herſelf as anxious for your welfare as if you were her own children, and who proteſts that if you were ſo in fact ſhe ſhould be the firſt to adviſe an immediate application to my Lord Belmont. His Lordſhip cannot ſee his grandchildren ſtarve, or what is ſcarcely preferable, juſtle through life neglected and forgotten, for want of that little which his affluent fortune can ſpare with eaſe. Conſider he is unacquainted with your misfortune. He concludes you poſſeſſed of twenty thouſand pounds; and though that is but a trifle to what you might reaſonably expect, yet no doubt he might imagine it enough to ſupport you genteelly. I aſſure you in your caſe, with ſuch juſt claims, I would not content myſelf even with a

little;

little; and if he finds you mean to make a piece of work about it, take my word for it he will alter his tone as they ſay. Mr. Howard told us t'other day, talking of your father, that if he had choſen to refuſe the compromiſe offered him by my Lord, he might have been in poſſeſſion of one of Lord Belmont's eſtates of three thouſand per annum; and though he gave away his own money, he had undoubtedly no right to mar the inheritance of his children. That alone would ſurely make a good law ſuit; and the ſimple apprehenſion of it would certainly be ſufficient to frighten my Lord into terms. Come, Miſs Seymour, I'm ſure a young lady of your ſenſe muſt ſee clearly that rather than have ſuch diſturbance and noiſe created, your grandfather would eaſily be induced to ſettle handſomely on you, were it only for huſh money.

Allow me to aſſure you once for all, Madam, anſwered I, that nothing on earth ſhall ever prevail with me to attempt ſuch a meaſure. I am confident you muſt have wholly miſunderſtood Mr. Howard on this point; for ſuch are the unhappy circumſtances of the caſe, that my father preſerved no ſort of claim upon Lord Belmont's fortune, and was thoroughly ſatisfied and contented with the ſtipulation. Though this ſum is now greatly reduced, we have reaſon to hope a little ſtill remains, and on that little I truſt we ſhall be able to ſubſiſt independent of theſe cruel relations, who have ſo unnaturally renounced us. To have recourſe to law, (were there even a probability of ſucceſs,) is a plan at which delicacy and pride equally revolt.

Pride and nonſenſe, cried ſhe. Indeed, Miſs Seymour, I cannot conceive for my part the

meaning of all this delicacy and refinement. 'Tis paſt my comprehenſion I confeſs.

Perhaps, cried Lady Farnford, who had not as yet been able to ſpeak for the volubility of her friend—perhaps Miſs Seymour is deterred by the hopeleſſneſs of ſucceſs. All the world eſteems Lord Belmont irrevocable in his determinations. He is indeed a very obſtinate, whimſical old man. Lady Linroſe too is generally diſliked; being haughty, proud, and inflexible.

Yes, and no doubt her Ladyſhip finds her own advantage, cried Mrs. Hindon, in keeping her nieces at a diſtance from their grandfather.

We have no reaſon to accuſe her Ladyſhip of any ſuch intention, ſaid I. Perhaps, had ſhe poſſeſſed either ſenſibility or benevolence equal to our wiſhes, we might have expected a little more kindneſs (though ever ſo privately offered,) to two unfriended relations; who, divided from their friends, and in a manner alone in the univerſe, lay claim, from her at leaſt, to the good offices of humanity: but tho' ſhe has not proved warmly our friend and protectreſs, I am thoroughly convinced ſhe is far from having injured the cauſe intruſted to her care. She is not generally beloved; but is allowed to be a woman of principle and honour; and a trifling portion of theſe qualities muſt prove ſufficient to deter her from a conduct ſo unworthy.

Well, Miſs Seymour, reſumed Lady Farnford, Lady Linroſe is not a woman eaſily melted by ſentiments of pity. But pride may extort where charity fails; and the deſire of preventing a revival of—of the unlucky ſtory, may perhaps prevail with her to intercede with my Lord

Lord Belmont to allow you a pretty round ſum to be quiet.

To Lady Linroſe, cried I with firmneſs, never will I apply.

Why then, returned Lady Farnford, what I mean to propoſe is, applying to their ſon. The idea occurred to me laſt night, on hearing Mr. Roatſley talked of in the higheſt terms by ſome friends we had to ſup with us.

Mr. Roatſley! exclaimed I.

Yes, Mr. Roatſley. It ſeems his election to the borough of —— took place the day before yeſterday. Some of the company had been warmly his friends on that occaſion, which naturally led them to talk of him, and they ſpoke in ſuch high terms of his character, that I could not avoid at the time concluding what probability of ſucceſs an application of this kind muſt have to a young man of his diſpoſition.

What connection has Mr. Roatſley with Lady Linroſe? cried I in a tremor.

Lord, don't you know, Miſs Seymour, that he is their ſon, and of courſe your firſt couſin?

Their ſon! Good heavens! exclaimed I, quite out of breath.

Good ſtars, ſaid Mrs. Hindon, is not that the young man who accompanied you in your paſſage from Calais, and of whom my brother talks ſo highly?

I knew not, Madam.—But I hope not.

And pray why do you hope ſo? For my part I think it is the moſt agreeable intelligence at this juncture you could wiſh to hear: for I aſſure you my brother Howard told me that he ſeemed much ſtruck, and indeed no wonder, by the elegance of your appearance; and beſides,

was it not he who attended ſo aſſiduouſly at the Opera houſe? Oh! I make no doubt he knew perfectly well how nearly you were connected, though perhaps a prohibition from her Ladyſhip deterred him from acknowledging the relationſhip. And ſo you never once ſuſpected that he was the late Lord Linroſe's ſon all the while? well that is the drolleſt affair I have heard this age.

I dare ſay Madam, cried I, there may be ſome miſtake in this, elſe we ſhould have been ſooner informed. How comes the ſon of Lady Linroſe to appear under a borrowed name?

O as to that point, ſaid Lady Farnford, in this country nothing is more common. Mr. Roatley aſſumed his preſent name becauſe it was accompanied by the inheritance of an eſtate in Ireland, left him by an uncle of his mother's, who died a few months ago.

How ſhall I convey to you, Sophia, an idea of the variety of emotions that agitated my heart at this moment! Oh! it is wholly impoſſible! This intelligence, ſo unexpected, ſo extraordinary, and oh! ſhall I add, ſo mortifying, (for a mixture of humiliation rendered my feelings at this moment ſtill more intolerable,) actually drew tears from my eyes;—tears, the ſource of which I could not abſolutely define, but which, to my companions, appeared merely the natural effects of uncertainty and vexation.

Oh! Sophia! how long have we remained in ignorance with regard to a point ſo infinitely intereſting! But I now find that this inheritance, and conſequently this change of name, took place immediately before our arrival in England. Indeed, on inveſtigating the matter,

ter, Mr. Howard has discovered that Mr. Roatsley's return was occasioned by that event. Mr. Howard therefore, in his enquiries relative to our family, heard often of a Mr. Dudley, but was informed he was abroad with his brother and Lord Belmont, and never received the slightest hint to lead him to conclude that our agreeable fellow traveller, Mr. Roatsley, was in fact the second son of the late Lord Linrose, whose character even from the lips of Mrs. Weldon, does so much honour to her family. Indeed, had these enquiries been made of late, no doubt we must have been immediately acquainted with the truth; but the society in which he ranges is totally distinct from that in which chance has placed us, and you may recollect it was directly on our arrival that Mr. Howard exerted himself to satisfy our anxious desire of being informed of every circumstance concerning our relations. At that time Mr. Roatsley was himself but just arrived at his mother's country seat. His return was not generally known; and as we have not been once in any private company with him, excepting one half hour in our own lodgings, no opportunity for a discovery could possibly have occurred. Not but that a secret solicitude has induced me more than once to ask several ladies who have been at different times visitors here if they were acquainted with Roatsley; but a negative reply was always given, and I make no doubt he is wholly unknown to most of Mrs. Hindon's friends.

I will not, however, comment on this interesting discovery till I have concluded my fatiguing conversation with these officious advisers.

You

You muſt know, reſumed Lady Farnford, that this young man has one of the beſt characters in the kingdom. To him therefore, Miſs Seymour, I would adviſe you to apply by letter without loſs of time, or perhaps Mr. Howard might tranſact the buſineſs better in perſon. Mr. Roatſley is adored by his family; and poſſeſſes, I am told, an influence over the mind of Lord Belmont which would inſure ſucceſs. If the old Lord thinks his vow binding, why he may keep it if he pleaſes, only let him act with juſtice, and ſupport you in the line of life to which you were born.

Good God, my dear Sophia, what a propoſal! It entirely diveſted me of the patience and temper with which I had hitherto liſtened to advice ſo ſelfiſh, ſo indelicate, ſo perfectly unfeeling. I therefore put a final period to a perſecution that was grown intolerable, by expreſſing myſelf with a cold and determined dignity, bordering perhaps a little on hauteur.

I muſt beg leave, ſaid I when I could contrive to be heard, entirely to act for myſelf and from my own ſentiments, in a point in which myſelf and ſiſter only are concerned; and tho' we muſt conſider ourſelves as under obligations to theſe friends who wiſh to alter a reſolution they may deem abſurd and prejudicial to our intereſt, yet I muſt uſe the freedom to acknowledge that we partake ſo much of our grandfather's firmneſs as to be quite immoveable in our determinations, when convinced there is nothing in them contrary to reaſon and rectitude.

The gravity with which I pronounced this, diſconcerted them; and they both in a breath began to apologize for the liberty they had taken

in

in an affair in which they said *our interest alone* could be ſuppoſed to influence them, I could not reſiſt ſmiling at the expreſſion. I have ſome reaſon to apprehend, however, that I ſhould not ſo ſoon have got rid of importunities equally troubleſome and officious, had not the reſt of the family made their appearance to breakfaſt, which happily interrupted the eager volubility of the ladies.

Oh, my Sophia, what a diſcovery! It has engroſſed and abſorbed me ever ſince I was made acquainted with it. Is it indeed poſſible that the ties of blood as well as thoſe of affection have united me with this amiable young man? I bluſh to make this confeſſion in terms ſo ſtrong, ſo explanatory; but the agitation of the preſent moment gives defiance to diffidence and ſhame, and conquers the reluctance with which ſuch an avowal muſt ever be accompanied.

I have pondered and conſidered every circumſtance of Mr. Roatſley's conduct ſince the beginning of our acquaintance, and indeed there are a number of circumſtances explained by this information, which hurt and diſpleaſe me.

After thinking and reflecting on the whole tenour of his behaviour, I am convinced that duty and obedience to his family have enrolled him a party in their determinations. How flattering, how humane were his attentions during our paſſage, while ignorant of our ſecret claims to his good offices; yet how eaſily was he impreſſed with the moſt injurious ſuſpicions to our diſadvantage immediately afterwards: ſuſpicions, to which he muſt have ſubmitted with hardly an attempt towards being undeceived; for what confidence was to be repoſed in the repreſentations

repreſentations of a woman to whoſe character and principles, even by the confeſſion of his friend Captain Bradſhaw, neither truſt nor credit were to be given. Oh! Sophia! I am afraid he would have remained at eaſe under this falſe opinion, had not Mr. Howard's letter to Lady Linroſe diſcovered us to him as a connection, in whoſe infamy and diſgrace a ſlight degree of delicacy muſt have rendered him concerned. It was the knowledge of this circumſtance, I now plainly perceive, that induced him to make known to Mr. Howard his fears for my ſafety, and which prevailed on him to diſcover an anxiety that wore the engaging aſpect of diſintereſted humanity, whilſt ſuppoſed to have actuated the boſom of a ſtranger, but which in Mr. Roatſley was but giving way to natural feelings.

I expreſs myſelf perhaps with acrimony; indeed on reading over what I have written I am confounded at my warmth of expreſſion. It is not eaſy, however, wholly to diveſt ones ſelf of prejudice in a point dear and intereſting to the heart. I am ſeverely wounded and diſappointed at one part of his conduct, which leads me perhaps to view it in other particulars through a falſe and unjuſt medium. His behaviour after all, in regard to me, has been amiable, nay noble in the higheſt degree: but ah! did he poſſeſs the mind, the ſoul, the feelings which I have been blind enough to attribute to him, never could he have ſtooped to countenance a tranſaction ſo cruel and unnatural as that of renouncing us. He would not have paſſed himſelf upon us for a ſtranger, concealed the relationſhip of which he was aſhamed, and courted our acquaintance under a borrowed

form

form while he poſſeſſed a title ſo indiſputable to our notice, had he choſen to have claimed it.

Perhaps indeed his mother had laid her injunctions on him to remain neuter in this affair till Lord Belmont's intentions were made known. But am I blinded by prepoſſeſſion when I aſſert that to deſert us after our accidental rencontre, and that profuſion of profeſſions of which it was productive, to withdraw his attention and regard only when from the renunciation of his family and from the peculiarity of our circumſtances he knew it was become eſſential to us, is a ſtep which even parental duty can by no means juſtify. Common minds may argue in that manner, may in that manner act from motives of cold obedience, but if his heart is compoſed of materials ſo frigid, ſo correct, it is a loſs little to be regretted. I am offended, Sophia, and perhaps unjuſtly; but I had weakly flattered myſelf our ſentiments were in ſome meaſure congenial; and his conduct has proved ſo oppoſite from what I am certain mine in ſimilar circumſtances would have been, that I am ſeverely wounded.

But my warmth may perhaps have led my concluſions too far. Lord Belmont's reſolution relative to us, muſt have arrived during his grandſon's abſence at his election, in which caſe he can hardly as yet have been informed of it, nor conſequently have determined how he will in future conduct himſelf. His return to town, which will probably happen in the courſe of a few days, muſt therefore explain whether or not I have done him injuſtice. If he yet ſhews himſelf in the light of our relation, and diſavows his part of the family compact, I ſhall

confess him wholly entitled to the too favourable opinion I have hitherto entertained of him.

I wish things may not be still worse with regard to Mr. Belisley's affairs than Mr. Howard has acknowledged; for that worthy friend is extremely thoughtful; and although I wished exceedingly to have a little private conversation with him in order to consult about our future plans, I could find no opportunity, for he left the parlour immediately after he had done breakfast, and has been abroad all the morning. No time however is to be lost in deciding. I am now doubly anxious that our country scheme may take place; and am labouring to become eager for it; endeavouring to represent it to myself in the gayest colours, as the rural abode of peace, innocence, and harmony, where no agitations shall in future ruffle, nor painful mortifications disturb the calm serenity of our lives. But it is in vain. My busy imagination perpetually places it in a different point of view, as a state of peacefulness, where though nothing wounds us nothing shall interest; and as a retirement, where though we enjoy tranquillity we shall not be able to taste happiness; and tho' tranquillity is perhaps in this fluctuating state the sole point attainable, and that to which all our wishes ought to be directed, yet at our time of life it is not easy to resist the flattering hope that days of real enjoyment are yet in store for us. If this is a delusion, yet oh may I ever cherish it as a support in every distress and a prop under every difficulty; without which adorning consolation life would be a burthen and sorrow unsupportable.

I forgot to ment on that Fanny has not seen William since the discovery of the letter. His absence,

abſence, which is unuſual, muſt either be attributed to the conſciouſneſs of his ſchemes having been detected by his miſtake, or to the change in our affairs, which took place immediately after that event. No doubt his aunt has warned him to keep out of the way till our future expectations are clearly aſcertained. Fanny, whoſe latent ſpirit has been rouſed by his duplicity, took the earlieſt opportunity to inform Mrs. Hindon of her unalterable reſolution to break off all connection with her nephew. The lady received this determination with ſome appearance of ſurpriſe, but with much leſs oppoſition than would have followed ſuch a ſtep ſome days ago.

FEB. 17.

Mr. Howard did not appear yeſterday till dinner was announced, I had it therefore in my power only to hint to him that I requeſted he would not attempt from friendly compaſſion to conceal any additional diſappointments that were yet to be told us. He aſſured me that nothing deciſive had taken place; Mr. Benſeley's affairs continuing in the confuſion and uncertainty in which he had before repreſented them. This paſſed in a large company who dined here and ſtaid the evening; by which means it was not poſſible for me to requeſt a private conference with him. Mr. Howard ſeems, with his uſual goodneſs, to participate in our chagrin; for I never obſerved him before ſo grave and thoughtful as he has been ſince the arrival of Lord Belmont's letter. I began to ſuſpect that ſome private uneaſineſs might have affected his ſpirits;

ſpirits but a peculiar ſoftneſs in his addreſs, both to Fanny and myſelf, now convinces me that to his heart the diſtreſſes of his friends and thoſe more particularly his own, convey almoſt equal pain.

I have had a long converſation this morning with Miſs Parſons. My heart, ſoftened by my own diſappointments, ſympathizes in her's with augmented commiſeration; and as ſhe perceives that I, who was ſo lately the happy object of her envy and admiration, as created for the enjoyment of affluence, proſperity, and ſocial happineſs, am now her companion in ſuffering, ſhe returns my attentions by redoubling her endeavours to ſoothe and amuſe me, while ſhe finds, that though born to ſo many advantages, I am no leſs open than herſelf to the attacks of fortune.

You imagine, Miſs Seymour, ſaid ſhe this morning as we ſat together at work in my dreſſing room, (for Mrs. Hindon was gone out, and I had inſiſted on Fanny's accompanying her in hopes that a little variety might diſſipate the chagrin of her ſpirits,) you imagine, and with reaſon that your mortifications and diſtreſſes have been ſevere; yet what have your ſufferings proved when compared with mine: hardly had I cloſed the eyes of one beloved parent, when the other claimed the ſame ſad duty. Theſe are however misfortunes which by the courſe of nature we muſt all expect. Heart-rending and acute as is the wound that ſuch calamities inflict, Time's lenient hand generally beſtows the balm to cloſe it. That loſs, heavy and irretrievable, did not come alone; the ſeverities of dependance, inſignificance, and contempt, were the miſerable conſequences of a blow in itſelf ſcarce ſupportable. Nor was

this

this all. She ſtopped, and hiding her face with her hands, ſuddenly gave way to a violent burſt of tears, which ſeemed to have been irrepreſſible and wholly overcame her.

I know well, cried I, you have ſuffered the rigours of fate, and Heaven knows what yet may remain for our portion, ſhould it pleaſe Almighty Providence to deprive us of independence, by taking away the remnant of our ſcanty fortune. All we ſhall have for it, my amiable friend, is to endeavour to profit from your laudable example, and to ſuffer unrepiningly thoſe ills, which from truſt in the unerring juſtice of Heaven, we may reſt aſſured muſt in the end work for our good.

Ah! Madam! cried ſhe, but there is one blow, cruel, biting, and acute, which the Almighty has not inflicted on you, and indeed it appears impoſſible you ſhould ever experience. You may behold yourſelf abandoned by the world, regarded with diſdain, and treated with indelicacy; but this you may bear, and from the conſcious ſuperiority of your mind, may bear perhaps with indifference; but ah! Miſs Seymour, there are wounds yet more bitter, feelings yet more keen, which I have endured, and which I heartily pray you may never know.

Heaven only knows, thought I to myſelf, whoſe bitter, keen, and heartfelt ſufferings may not yet prove mine.

Yes, cried I, to the amiable, unhappy girl, taking hold of her hand with unfeigned compaſſion, I am ſenſible you claim too juſtly the ſuperiority in affliction. My heart feels ſincerely for what yours has endured. You have my warmeſt ſympathy; and if the demand is not importunate, and the recital will not prove a

probe

probe rather than a relief, will you grieve me so far as to unburthen your mind to me?

It is long, long, cried she, softened by my request, since my heart has experienced the sense of confidence. The world turns with disgust from the oppressed; it flies distress as if contagious; and prosperity beholds it as a frightful picture presented to its view to check dissipation and to frown on enjoyment.

She then told me that when she was yet at school, Captain Wilmot, at that time a young Ensign, and nearly related to her, used frequently to spend some weeks at her father's vicarage for the amusement of shooting; and that during the holidays, when she always returned home, he constantly paid her the most flattering attention, till she confessed he made some impression on her heart. Being however hardly fifteen, and little of her age, she looked upon herself as a mere girl, and the school duties generally drove her cousin from her thoughts and conquered her attachment.

At seventeen she quitted school entirely. It was then that the abovementioned diversion furnished a pretence for the Captain's spending almost the whole shooting season at their house; a circumstance that the young lady suspected proceeded from a tenderer motive. In fact he had been but a short time there, when he took an opportunity to disclose his passion, which met with all the success he could have wished.

Gained by his early and continued partiality, accustomed as her near relation to see him in the most favourable light and to hear him favourably spoken of by others, she was blind to the insipidity and conceited folly of his character. Habit and affection equally conspired

to conceal his errors from her view; and if she caught occasionally a transient glimpse of his imperfections, his unbounded professions of love, added to her tenderness for him, cast a partial veil over his defects. She acknowledged to her lover, that her heart had not been proof against his assiduities, and that were her parents to agree to their union, her consent should follow.

Mr. Parsons's illness however, which soon after followed, prevented the subject from being mentioned either to him or his lady. Miss Parsons, from almost never quitting the bed side of her father, had few opportunities of entertaining her lover. The family was become anxious and gloomy, and the Captain not finding his residence so agreeable as formerly, soon left them to join his regiment.

Mr. Parsons's death, which happened a few days after the lover departed, bringing the embarrassment of his affairs to light, informed the Captain too soon that instead of a very comfortable settlement, (for some previous windfalls to the family had induced him to conclude that Miss Parsons would be left in affluent circumstances,) he should not receive a shilling with his bride.

I hope, Madam, you will do me the justice to believe, said she, that in such circumstances I was not girl enough to remain blind to the many obstacles which then appeared against my union with a young soldier, who had little more than his commission to subsist on; and fearing that from motives of delicacy he might be under difficulties how to act, I wrote to him as soon as grief would allow me, and laying briefly before him the disadvantages of fulfilling our wishes

at

at that time, ſince my mother and I exiſted merely upon a ſmall precarious penſion, which depended on her life, added, with many aſſurances of unalterable affection, that till things wore a more favourable aſpect, our engagements muſt be ſuſpended.

Would you believe it, Madam! my letter for ſix-weeks remained unanſwered, tho' ſurely my diſmal ſituation demanded at leaſt the *ſympathy* of a man who had ſo lately profeſſed himſelf my lover: and when at length it arrived, it was ſome time before I could comprehend the contents. It was dated ten days after the receipt of mine; though undoubtedly it could not have taken above a month to come from Liverpool, where his regiment was quartered. But this artifice, I afterwards found, was intended to deceive me into an opinion, that it had been written previous to a ſucceſſion to ſix hundred a year, which had fallen to him by the death of a diſtant relation.

In this epiſtle, written with the moſt phlegmatic indifference, he pretends to regard my letter as intended to cancel all our engagements; to which he implicitly ſubmits with many feigned expreſſions of regret.

My conduct, he ſaid, induced him ſincerely to wiſh that he might never behold me more. He called me inſenſible, unfeeling, and ungrateful; and after beſtowing a number of other appellations equally falſe and deceitful, concluded with praying that time and abſence might enable him to conquer a paſſion, which every line of his letter proved exiſted no more.

On a firſt peruſal, I really imagined that ſome meaning miſconſtrued, or ſome phraſe miſunderſtood, had given umbrage to my couſin, and

in

in the height of my uneaſineſs inſtantly again wrote to him. I aſſured him ſolemnly that I ſhould ever regard as ſacred the engagement into which I had entered with my whole heart, and to fulfil which was its firſt wiſh; and that all I deſired was to poſtpone an event that ſeemed at preſent mutually imprudent.

This however he thought proper never to acknowledge; and I was ſoon convinced that he had joyfully laid hold of this opportunity to regain his freedom. The conviction of his infidelity coſt me many ſighs; but the death of my dear and reſpected mother ſoon awakened me to new affliction.

Having been in her laſt moments recommended by her to my aunt, and left ſolely dependent on her care, I was invited, ſoon after the laſt ſad duties were performed, to take up my reſidence in her family, and began immediately to experience that cruel reverſe which has embittered every ſucceeding hour. You cannot but have perceived, my dear Miſs Seymour, that my misfortunes have reduced me almoſt to a level with the domeſtics in this houſe. Mrs. Hindon evidently regards me, and uniformly treats me as a menial dependent, inſtead of cheriſhing me with that care which my connexion with her claims, and which her ſolemn promiſe to my mother to take charge of me ſeemed to imply and led me to expect. In lieu of thoſe careſſes, and that admiration which in my happier days any little advantages I poſſeſſed never failed to excite, and which made me think with pleaſure on ſpending my days under her protection, I found my aunt was one of thoſe who are wholly influenced by ſituation and appearances. Seeing me deſtitute and forlorn, ſhe now regarded

me

me as an orphan whom an oſtentation of charity induced her to retain, and who, though entitled as by relation to ſubſiſtence, its unavoidable attendants were contempt and degradation.

You will eaſily imagine, that in my humiliation I ſaw the eyes of my couſin with additional pain. The day on which you dined here, immediately after your arrival, was that on which I ſaw him for the firſt time: and though I am certain he muſt have felt embarraſſed and diſconcerted at the incident, he behaved with a degree of inſolence and effrontery which converted my expiring regret (for it is not eaſy wholly to eradicate a firſt and ſtrong impreſſion) into ſelf congratulation and gratitude to Heaven that I had been ſpared a fate ſo miſerable as that of being connected with a human being capable of ſuch meanneſs and indelicacy.

I was now in company with Captain Wilmot every day; but we mutually avoided being ſo without witneſſes; and ſome time elapſed, though probably you never remarked it, before we even exchanged words. The cuſtom of ſeeing me has however ſo entirely conquered all embarraſſment or ſhame on his part, (if he was ever capable of any) that he has more than once preſumed to treat me with the familiarity due only to an inferior, calling me his pretty Jenny with the impertinent eaſe of a man who imagines that in my ſituation even his freedoms muſt be well received and dare not be reſented. In ſuch circumſtances, where pride and delicacy are liable every moment to the ſevereſt wounds, with no enjoyment in the preſent and no chearing expectations for the future, happineſs is a

phantom which flies me, and which I have no prospect of overtaking on this side of the grave.

The unfortunate girl concluded her story with tears, in which compassion made me heartily join. I think, my Sophia, my distresses seem nothing when compared with the burthen she has supported so long, and from which there appears so little prospect of relief. How should I have rejoiced had more prosperous circumstances allowed me to place this amiable young woman beyond the reach of suffering from pride and poverty, and enabled her to preserve an honourable independence!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

BRITISH LIBRARY
15
MAY
74